THE

ITALIAN MARAUDERS.

VOLUME I.

JUST PUBLISHED,

In 2 volumes, Price 8s. Boards.

THE BRAVO's SON,

OR THE

Chief of St. Maldo.

BY WITHAM FARROW, ESQ.

With an introductory scene, by way of apology to the Reviewers, between Mr. H..... and Mr. John K....., Managers of the late Theatre-Royal Covent-Garden, the Ballet Master, and the Author; with a poetical preface.

THE

ITALIAN MARAUDERS

A Romance,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY ANNA MATILDA.

VOL. I.

What is man!
When the worst heart can wear the brow of virtue,
And false appearance smile us to destruction?
And yet, what is he not, when crowned with truth
And every social virtue? HAVARD.

London:
Printed by J. DEAN, 57, Wardour Street, Soho.
FOR GEORGE HUGHES, 221, TOTTENHAM-COURT-ROAD, NEAR STORE-STREET.
SOLD BY SHERWOOD, NEELEY, AND JONES, PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1810.

[illegible]

THE

ITALIAN MAURAUDERS.

&c. &c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE darkest shades of night completely overshadowed the face of nature, as the monks of the Convent of St. Mark prepared to pay that tribute to departed piety, which the virtues of a deceased brother demanded. The procession moved from the portal of the lone pile to the cemetary. The Abbot, like a father paying the last duties to a child,

preceded the procession. The sonorous voices of the brotherhood, chaunting a requium for the soul of the departed, alone sounded on the breeze which swept along the ground.

The bier on which the corse was placed, was at length deposited beneath the altar of the chapel. The mellow notes of the organ mingled its deep tones with the voices of the monks, while performing the last ceremony usually observed on committing the remains of a departed brother to the cold jaws of the tomb. The service was nearly concluded, when a messenger, in breathless hate, followed by the porter who attended the door, rushed

into the chapel, and, on being introduced to the Abbot, desired to see Father Anselmo.

"Father Anselmo," repeated the superior, "dost thou not know my son, that he has departed this terrestrial sphere for ever—we are about to commit his last remains to its parent earth."

The messenger appeared struck with surprise; but recovering himself, he delivered to the Abbot a letter, directed to Anselmo, a brother of the Convent of St. Mark; which, as soon as the funeral rites were concluded, the holy Father opened, and read as follows:

"Hasten to the chateau of the Mar-

"quis di Mongalfi. The hand of death "is on him. In his intervals from the "most excruciating agony, he is con- "tinually inquiring for you—haste, or "your holy interposition will be vain."

"Hasten!" said the messenger, impatiently, "let, one of the reverend fathers accompany me; the consolations of religion will render him happy in his last moments."

"Bertrand," said the Abbot to a monk, who had, but a short time before, renounced the world, "attend this person to the chateau di Montgalfi; let the dying man's sorrows be deposited in thy breast. Thy piety will afford him consolation."

The monk bowed, crossed his arms on his bosom, and left the chapel. Preceded by the messenger, he soon arrived at the chateau di Montgalfi. The holy father was ushered into the chamber of the dying man, who had just recovered the effects of a paroxysm; and on some restoratives being administered, was sufficiently recovered to receive the consolation of the father. On the appearance, he started; but again recovering the little strength which remained to him, he said:—

"How—where is Anselmo? Is the holy man still unable to quit the Convent, to lull the waking troubles of the mind, and smooth the pillow of depart-

ing life? say, why did he not answer the last summons he will ever receive from me?"

"Be composed, my son;" said Bertrand, "the will of Heaven be done: forbid it that we should arraign the decrees of Omnipotence! Father Anselmo has left us for ever!"

"For ever!" repeated the Marquis —"'tis well he has but preceded me a little. An hour will elapse, and then we meet again."

"Let not his death affect you," continued the monk; "in my bosom deposit the weight of thy sorrows, and the consolation which religion affords I will administer to thee."

"My offences, in the eye of Heaven, I trust, are not unpardonable;" said the dying man—"but I have a charge of the most sacred nature—a daughter. She, alas! will soon, too soon, be an orphan. The *fiat* of Heaven is gone forth; and my child, my Angela, will lose the support which has hitherto protected her. It is to you, father, I would wish to consign her. Placed in your care, beyond the reach of temptation, till the period when time shall fix her in a situation, which, had I retained my mortal covering a little longer, it would have been my first wish to have seen her in; or till the veil shall have secluded her from a world, in which the ma-

chinations of the malevolent and avaricious, too often triumph over the unsuspecting and ingenuous."

"Son," said the monk, "remember that the deed which Heaven sanctions is irrevocable; and that, though the inscrutable ways of Providence may permit vice to triumph, justice will at length attain an ascendency, and truth pervert the dark-laid schemes of villany —proceed my son."

"I would wish," continued the Marquis, "that my daughter should be thy care. The ebb of life rolls fast away."

At this moment the rolling of carriage-wheels in the court-yard, an-

nounced the arrival of a visitor.—"Thank Heaven," continued the Marquis, "my prayers were heard; my Angela will not be left friendless. The protection an uncle can afford will be hers."

A servant entered to announce the Chevalier Manfredino; and a moment had scarcely elapsed, ere the two brothers were folded in the arms of each other.

"My brother," said Manfredino, "in what a situation do I find you!"

"Receive," returned the Marquis, with difficulty, rising from his pillow as he spoke—"receive the sacred charge I am about to deposit in your

hands. My daughter, my Angela, receive her of me! This holy father," continued he, turning to the monk, "will witness the precious request. The early friendship which I entertained for the Count de Valmont, claims, that in our children that friendship should be continued. Let them be united. It was the last request of his father, whom I attended in his last moments; it is likewise mine—my thread of life is spun—let me see my daughter once again, ere I am no more."—(The, lovely Angela, at this moment, entered the room.)

"Approach, my daughter," said he. "To the guardianship of your uncle

and this good priest, I resign you.—Image of an adored wife," continued he, taking her hand, "may thy life pass less chequered with sorrows than that of thy sainted mother; may each rising and setting sun witness thee tranquil and unruffled, as thy moments have hitherto been;—give my wishes for every happiness which can attend mortals, to Valencio—and my eternal adieu likewise give him. Him I have chosen as the partner of thy riper years; he has been that of thy childish ones.—Does thy heart, my daughter, beat responsive to the choice?—Oh! my child, may a few revolving years secure thee the happiness which the last breath of

thy father will be spent in prayers to promote!"

His voice failed him; and heaving a deep sigh, which responded from the heart of Angela, expired. The weak frame of the orphan sunk beneath the shock; a succession of fainting fits followed, which left her at length nearly as exhausted as that father for whom her unceasing filial efforts had been exhausted in vain.

The hectic flush which in general mantled the face of Manfredino, disappeared, and a sallow paleness overspread his features. He retired with precipitation from the appartment, desiring the confessor to follow him.

The recovery of Angela was slow and doubtful, and four days elapsed ere she was sufficiently restored to quit her chamber. Manfredino, in the mean time had been employed in giving directions for the funeral of his brother. He had, several times, been observed by the domestics in close conference with the monk. Scarcely a day elapsed but they were closetted together, and no traces of regret were now to be observed on the stern features of the Count. On hearing that his unfortunate niece had quitted her bed for the first time, he desired her attendance in the saloon. Angela immediately endeavoured to obey, and supporting her-

self on the shoulder of her attendant repaired thither.

On approaching the door of the room, she fancied she heard a confused murmur within it, but on her nearer approach it ceased, and the door opening, Manfredino appeared. He inquired with apparent tenderness, into the state of her health, and taking her hand led her to a chair.

"I have requested this interview," said he, "in the presence of the holy father, Bertrand, in order to inform you of the disposition we have made for the future disposal of yourself. Agreeably to the last wishes of your father, we have selected the Convent of Ursuline

Nuns, near ———, for your future residence."

Angela started, that her uncle should prefer a Convent so remote, to those more immediately in the vicinity, was a circumstance inexplicable. Manfredino however continued—

"You seem surprised; the retirement which we have chosen for you, is, in every respect, the most eligible. The holy Abbess is the mother of the community, and will be happy to receive you upon the word of this reverend father. When the last duties are performed which the memory of my deceased brother demand, you shall depart for the place of your future residence.

Angela burst into tears—"Must I then," said she, "leave the spot which contains all that is earthly of the best of father's! but, I am resigned; the will of that father must be fulfilled, and ill should I deserve the affection which he always evinced for me, could I not bear the loss even of life with fortitude!"

"The last request of my departed brother," said Manfredino, "was that I would secure an asylum to shield you from the temptation and treachery of the world. A messenger has been dispatched in order to prepare the sisterhood for your reception. When my military duties permit I shall visit you

in the seclusion, which till you are of an age to determine for yourself, Heaven has designed for you—farewell, my daughter; when the still hour of midnight envelopes the earth with its sombre shades, we will consign the sad remains of your father to the cold tomb. The holy father Bertrand will officiate, and his pious prayers will accompany the fleeting soul to its last abode."

He quitted the apartment, followed by the monk, leaving the alarmed and agitated Angela a prey to the most agonizing sensations. Bereft of father, friends, an orphan, about to be committed to the care of strangers, of whom

till this sad hour she had never heard, and who could not possibly have conceived half that affection for her which she had ever been accustomed to receive from her departed parents. "I must," said she, mentally, "fly to the walls of a Convent for that peace, which is, alas! too often sought in vain, in the world. The roses which deck the path of life too soon fade, and only thorns remain to remind us of the flowers which once bloomed on the same stem. Happiness and misery are, alas! too closely interwoven; we cannot taste the one without drinking deep of the other, and while we inhale the draughts of bliss, the dregs remind us of the uncertainty of its continuance."

CHAPTER II.

THE thickening gloom of evening found Angela sitting at her window, in the melancholy pensiveness of restrained sorrow. The preparations for the approaching solemn occasion were concluded, and she was summoned by her uncle to attend the corse of a loved parent to its last abode.

In the hall were assembled the do-

mestics belonging to the establishment of the late Marquis, whose swoln eyes and slow unwilling step, as they followed the remains of their beloved master, bespoke their grief proceeding from the heart.

The solemn procession at length moved forward. Immediately after the bier, followed the Lady Angela, leaning on the arm of her uncle, preceding a few of the most intimate friends of the deceased. They were joined near the chapel by some monks from a small monastry which was attached to it. They had been both founded and endowed by the late benevolent de

Montgalfi, and intended by him as a mausoleum in which the ashes of himself and his successors might repose.

The procession having reached the chapel, entered the body of the pile, and the corse was deposited below the altar. Contrary to the intimation which Angela had received from her uncle, the Abbot read the ceremony, and the deep responses of the monks added to the solemnity of the awful scene. The fretted walls of the chapel were scarcely discernible through the misty gloom, which the rays of the torches that surrounded the altar, served but to render the more perceptible.

The last sad ceremony concluded,

the procession returned slow and sad across the plain which divided the chateau from the monastry; when Angela, overcome by the varied agonizing emotions which agitated her, caught the hand of her uncle for support. His arm sustained her till they reached the chateau, when, ordering the attendance of the Confessor from St. Mark's, he delivered his niece to the care of the attendants, and retired, darkness lowering o'er his brow, to his apartments.

The sun at length surmounting the alpine barrier, which enviously strove to intercept its rays, darted full into the chamber of Angela, and a night's refreshing slumber having so far restored

her, she began, assisted by her attendant, to make preparation for her departure for the Convent, her uncle having previously informed her that that event would immediately succeed the burial of her father.

Her task was completed ere the breakfast-bell summoned her to the saloon. Thither however she immediately repaired. On her entrance she discovered her uncle and Bertrand in close conversation, which her appearance seemed to interrupt, and Manfredino harshly desired her to be seated.

Breakfast was concluded by the melancholy party nearly in silence. This, however, was broken at length by Man-

fredino—" Angela," said he, addressing her in an accent rather kinder than that in which he had previously spoken to her, " we have been induced to confide you to the maternal care of the Abbess of the Convent of St. Ursula, near ———."

Angela nodded assent, Manfredino continued—

" The motives which have influenced our determinations in adopting this Convent for your future abode in preference to those with which you are better acquainted, are various. There you will be beyond the machination of the libertine; secluded from the example and company of the inhabitants

of the world, your ideas will naturally turn to that solace within, which a well-regulated mind always possesses. I am again summoned to the seat of war; my absence, however, will in no wise affect the plan which reason has marked out to us as the only course we can pursue. The holy father will accompany you to the Convent; the sisterhood, upon his introduction, will receive you into their bosom; the church will at some future period be open to you, or if a suitable establishment should offer, your happiness shall be my first wish—Adieu." They then together left the apartment.

With tremulous and sorrowful steps

she retraced the way to her chamber. She still thought she heard the tolling of her father's knell: "Alas!" cried she, "in the sepulchre in which thou my father, art deposited, is earthed up all my felicity. So soon to be banished the scenes in which my only happy hours have been passed, to leave the spot which now contains every thing that can constitute my happiness, is indeed the greatest pang they can inflict. But let me, my father, let me, ere I quit this peaceful spot for ever, visit thy tomb; let me clasp the cold marble, rendered sacred by thy dust, to my bosom; and, oh! forgive the impious wish, that, in the chilling embrace, I might forget my misery for ever."

Adopting this sudden resolution, she hastily equipped herself, and having descended, slowly traversed the winding path which led from the chateau to the chapel. An awful sensation seized her tremulous frame as she entered the pile; with slow and unequal paces she approached the altar, and sunk upon the stone which had been placed over the grave.

"If the orisons of the wretched are permitted to reach the mansions of the blest," cried she, "then surely the shade of my revered father would hover over the deserted offspring of his love. Still would his benignant shade envelope the form, which the persecu-

tions of fate appeared to have abandoned to despair and wretchedness. Lend me thy protection," she continued, "lend thy celestial aid to the deserted Angela. Oh! enable me to endure, with resignation, the ill and persecutions which the avaricious and the malevolent are ever heaping on the orphan and the helpless! Blessed shade!" continued she, "methinks I see thee in thy celestial habitation, praying the assistance of the blessed, in endowing me with strength to overcome the difficulties which appear to be accumulating around me. I will obey thy warning voice; even now, my father, thy whisperings will not be disregarded.

Thou formed my infant mind to endure the shocks of fate; why then should I shrink appalled because the envenomed shaft is flown. Not one appeared to ward it from me, and I must bear the barbed sting."

With faultering steps she turned from the spot, and walked towards the chateau, with a heart at least more resigned than when she left it. Pensively she retraced her steps, and entered a gate which opened upon a lawn flanked by posterns of flowers. She seated herself on a rude bench, reared against the trunk of an aged ash, coeval nearly with the turrets of the building.

"Here," said she, casting her eyes

around, "here have I spent my happiest hours, here have I received the lessons which the paternal solicitude of the best of fathers dictated, as the surest method of fortifying my mind against the attacks of misfortune. Alas! how soon have I swerved from his injunctions; how soon does the reality of calamity dispel the vain barriers, which a stoic or a philosopher causes against the affections of our nature. 'Tis here the companion of my childish sports; my beloved Valerio first taught my wayward heart to feel a sensation which only he could raise. But when will retrospection cease? How oft shall I, when stretched on my lone couch at

St. Ursula, conceive myself wandering through the labyrinths, which Valerio and myself were wont to traverse in our happier hours. But to what a reality will the midnight curfew awake me; when with its clamorous and doleful note it summons the wretched inhabitants to a duty, ill according with the feelings of the heart!"

The footsteps of one of the domestics approaching, interrupted the wanderings of her imagination; and eluding the observation of any one, she left the spot, and hastened to her chamber.

From the window she perceived the travelling equipage ready; and her

attendant soon after entered to inform her, that her holy conductor awaited her in the hall. She immediately descended to it, where Bertrand received her; and having handed her into the carriage and seated himself, he desired the postilion to proceed, telling the attendant of Angela to follow in the next vehicle.

Soon the waters of the Adriatic, and the lofty domes and gilded spires of Venice, were lost in distance. The beauties of Nature, however, amply compensated for those of art. The sun, nearly at its meridian height, varying the contracting shadows every mile as they proceeded, till at length

nothing of them remained, hung resplendant. The tall pine and mountain-ash, gently waved their leafy foliage to the breeze. The mind of Angela, wearied with the continual inquietude which had of late agitated it, sought relief in the beauties of the surrounding scenery. The most abstracted cannot view with indifference, the beautiful and sublime with which Nature abounds. The mind of Angela, on viewing them so exquisitely diversified, acquired a calm, which had been for some time a stranger to her bosom.

"Ah," sighed she mentally," "had I been permitted to have passed my

life in the peaceful abode of my sainted father, dispensing the blessings which Heaven had so unsparingly lavished on me, to the indigent and the needful, how blessed had been my lot; then, indeed, I had not envied the peaceful hind the tranquillity which he seems so eminently to possess.

The taciturnity which reigned within the vehicle, was ill calculated to banish the train of melancholy reflections into which she had fallen. Bertrand maintained a sullen silence, which she did not venture to break, till the lingering beams of the declining sun gave place to the milder rays of the silver moon. She then

ventured to observe, that she supposed they must be near a resting-place.

"Not yet, Signora," returned the Monk; "yon bright orb must have run half its course, ere we can venture to seek repose; we shall, however, in a short time, be able to procure at least necessary refreshment for you; but our stay will not be of long duration."

Silence was again observed, which Angela did not feel inclined to interrupt a second time; and she again gave audience to her former pensive melancholy train of ideas. These, however, were interrupted by the postillion observing, that the strength

of the horses was nearly exhausted; and that he was afraid they would not be able to reach the next post-house, before the storm, which he foresaw approaching, should have rendered the roads of the forest, through which their route lay, nearly impassable.

Angela immediately let down the blinds, which had been carefully, in spite of her earnest intreaties to the contrary, drawn up by Bertrand, and found that the prognostics of the driver of the machine were but too well founded. The moon, which had lately shone in its fullest splendor, suddenly became clouded in the most impenetrable darkness. Thickening va-

pours nearly obscured the whole scene. The wind howled among the craggy rocks, and the yawning caverns sent forth the reiterated echo. The foaming cataract, as though indignant at the opposition which it met with from the blast, dashed with tenfold fury against the bed, which, by the continued rushing of its current, it had worn in the solid rock, and growled along its pebly track with a murmur hoarser than usual. Suddenly a loud clap of thunder, preceded by a flash of lightning, which appeared for an instant to illumine the whole form of Nature, and by rendering them visible, increased the gloomy horrors of

the scene. The carriage, in which the terrified Angela was placed, was driven forwards at a furious rate; till a second flash, still more appalling than the first, disclosed to the affrighted postilion a precipice, down which they must inevitably have been precipitated, had not the momentary glance discovered to them their situation. Turning the heads of the horses from the threatened danger, and entering the forest, the rain descended in torrents. The trees, which had stood the pelting blasts for centuries, bent beneath the force of the wind, and bowed their leafy tops to the resistless pressure. The tempest, however, at length in

some measure abated its violence; but the rushing currents from the neighbouring hills, rendered the farther progress of the carriage nearly impossible.

"We will alight," said Bertrand, "as soon as we reach the summit of the hill up which we are ascending. I know a friendly cottager, who lives at a short distance from the road, who will gladly extend to us the shelter which his hospitable roof affords."

Angela gladly assented; and the weary animals having at length surmounted the difficulties which impeded their progress, arrived at the end of a narrow lane, branching from the main

road through the forest, into its more intricate recesses.

"Here," said Bertrand to his passive companion, "we will alight, and ordering the postilion, as he spoke, to halt, he opened the door of the carriage, and taking the hand of Angela led her from it.

"Direct," said he to the man, "the people who are in the other carriage, when they arrive, to stop, and bring me notice of their appearance. Something must have detained them on the road," continued he, seeing Angela about to express her regret that her attendant was not with her, "but a short time will bring them here; and if not

I will send some of the servants of my friend in pursuit of them. They are all well acquainted with the intricacies of the wood. Pray,"—continued he,—turning to the postilion, "when did you first notice the absence of the other carriage, which followed us from Venice."

"The last time I saw it," replied the man, "was when we stopped at sunset; but I did not miss it till we reached this place."

"Something may have delayed its arrival a few moments," returned Bertrand; "but come," continued he, taking Angela's arm in his, "a few hours sound repose, after the horrors you have

experienced, will renovate your exhausted strength."

Having proceeded a considerable way through several windings of the forest, in an abrupt angle of the road, they stood opposite a small door, which appeared to be the only method of gaining an entrance to an apparently very extensive range of buildings. Bertrand, with the but-end of a pistol, which he drew from under his priest's habit, struck two knocks at the portal. At the sight of such a weapon in the hands of her spiritual conductor, her apprehensions had nearly deprived her of all sensation. She, however, conquered her feelings. No sound returned the rough salutation

of Bertrand for admittance, save the hollow breathings of the wind through the interior of the buildings. Bertrand repeated the blow with redoubled vehemence, and at length a rough voice demanded the name of the intruder, who, at such an unseasonable hour, disturbed the repose of the solitary inmates of the pile.

"A friend," answered Bertrand.

"A friend!" repeated the inquirer, "we have seldom any visitors of that description—thy name?"

"Pietro de Cronoo!" replied Bertrand, in a voice, the very echo of which made Angela tremble; "now art thou convinced?"

"De Cronco," replied the other, unlocking the gate; which though of small dimensions appeared to be very securely fastened, by a number of bolts and bars, which as he drew them back, grated on their rusty fastenings.

The unfolding doors at length opened, and Betrand entered, dragging the trembling Angela after him. An impenetrable darkness reigned within the pile, till the lanthorn of their guide being unshifted, in part disclosed the horrors of the place. The door opened into a kind of court, which was open to the roof, through which the rain, in many places, had entered in torrents. The walls were hung with apparently use-

less weapons of defence, and the stone pavement strewed with lumber of various kinds.

Angela scarcely able to stand, surveyed the internal of the building with as much terror, as she had an hour before done the wars of the elements in the forest, and secretly wished herself there again, though exposed to its utmost fury. She began to doubt internally the identity of her holy protector; and as the idea crossed her mind, a sensation freed her heart, which her greatest fortitude could scarcely contend with. She was roused, however, by the rough voice of her guide, desiring Bertrand to resign her to his care.

She shrunk appalled at the idea, and raising her eyes to those of the claimant, which she saw fixed upon her, vainly endeavoured to discover a ray of kindness on them. The features, dark as his business appeared to be, possessed not a lineament by which she could find a way to his heart. To a form athletic as the statue of Hercules, which appeared formerly to have decorated that part of the edifice near which they stood, but which, from its mutilated state, could not now be considered an addition even to the spot in which it was situated, he joined features hard and ferocious; a black patch on one cheek, above which a larger scar

was seen, added to the brutality of his appearance; a dagger, stuck in his girdle, completed the semblance of nothing human.

In a harsh discordant voice he desired Angela to take his arm, and Bertrand following on the other side, they passed the ruined part of the edifice, and arrived at the foot of a flight of stairs, decayed in many parts. Up these they ascended, and entered a gallery, at the farthest end of which her guide stopped, and desired her to enter an apartment, which he said was the best the place afforded. It was large and dreary. In the middle of it hung suspended from the ceiling, a large iron

lamp, which had been recently filled with oil. Bernardo applied the lamp, which he held to the wick, but the dull glance which it reflected, did not permit her examining the large painted glass casements, through which the rays of the sun were formerly admitted, but which, from long neglect, had become nearly impenetrable. A large topped-bedstead, whose anciently magnificent hangings, bespoke it to have been of considerable note a century before, but which was fast falling to decay, occupied one corner of the room; a large arm-chair, and an oak-table, which appeared to be fixed to the floor, comprised the whole of the

furniture with which this abode of dreary solitude was decorated.

"This, Signora," said the wretch, whom Bertrand, or as we shall in future denominate Pietro, called Bernardo, "will in future be your abode, as long as the will of our master orders it so. Your long journey must have left you in need of repose. You will, I suppose, immediately retire; some refreshment shall be sent you, by your future attendant." Turning to Pietro, he continued; "that disguise can no longer be of service to you, divest yourself of it."

Pietro threw his monkish habiliaments on the ground.

"You have yet to explain," continued Bernardo, "you could not have chosen a habit more foreign to your nature."

"That part of it," returned Pietro fiercely, "I shall explain to those who are authorised to demand an elucidation. You would do well to recollect that you are not that man."

"If you can do so to the satisfaction of your comrades, it will be well for you: I doubt that, however, the task will, at least, be difficult."

The ruffians now retired, leaving Angela in a state of mind beggaring description. The fatigues of her body,

however, overcome those of her mind; and throwing herself on the bed she forgot for a time the remembrance of either.

CHAPTER III.

THE dawn of the succeeding morning found Angela still involved in unquiet slumbers. The visions of sleep presented to her terrified imagination the most heart-appalling images. She conceived herself wandering among the verdant hills which environed the Chateau di Montgalfi. A ruffian suddenly appeared, and seizing her, dragged

her to the edge of a tremendous precipice. Her screams were in vain; no one approached to her rescue: he was about to hurl her, from his arms, down the craggy steep, when Valerio, from a cave in a neighbouring rock, rushes to her assistance. He attacked the villain—they struggled, and Angela, nearly fainting, saw the yawning gulf receive them both. The agony of her mind became insupportable, and in vainly endeavouring to grasp the vacant air she awoke.

The impression was so strong upon her mind, that the return of reason could scarcely banish the idea; she still imagined she saw the mangled form

of Valerio, in the assassin's grasp, still sinking into the unfathomable abyss—still heard his last words resounding on her ear.

"Where art thou, my Valerio," she cried, still labouring under the delusion, "why dost thou not return? Perhaps at this moment, when I am doomed, in agony unutterable, to be for ever an exile to the world, thou art seeking thy Angela, in the propitious shades of our infancy—art making the hills, covered with tall waving ash, resound with my name: nought but echo answers thee. Oh, horror! perhaps thou art at this moment encountering the banditti's fury, in thy search after thy wretched orphan."

A knock at the door of the apartment interrupted the disagreeable train of reflections, into which she had fallen. Risings, he wrapped herself in a mantle, and opening the door, her attendant entered, bearing her breakfast on a salver. She appeared about the age of forty, and the furrowing traces of grief and disappointment could be easily traced in a countenance, which once appeared to possess every agreeable feature.

"Signora," said she, as she entered, "Bernardo bade me attend you thus early this morning with refreshment. He is at present absent, but his return is every moment expected."

Angela would have continued silent, but reflecting that such obstinacy might influence her attendant against her, she said, "pray can you tell me to whom this place belongs, or how long I am expected to remain here?"

"To these questions," returned the woman, "I am not at liberty to reply, even if I knew, but that I shall not, Bernardo takes especial care; into these things he says it is not my business to pry. Necessity, and the certainty that I am completely in his power, reduces me to obedience, or long ere this, I had left this place and its inmates to the solitary comforts which it affords. I run considerable

risque in thus holding converse with you; even now I may be overheard."

"Pray can you inform me," continued Angela, "to whom this place belongs?"

"To detail all I know about it, would take me some time. You must, by this time, be aware that the present owners are banditti."

Angela started at this confirmation of her worst fears.

"Bernardo and Pietro," continued the woman, "are at breakfast, I cannot give you the particulars, therefore, immediately. As soon, however, as they depart in the evening, for they

are going at sunset to purchase provisions, I will detail them."

"I should be, indeed, greatly indebted to you for the information," replied Angela, "but tell me can you give me any idea of the length of time I am to pass in this wretched place."

"Of that I am totally ignorant," answered Margaretta, "Pietro, most likely, will not remain here many hours. The abbey is continually changing its inmates, and, except Bernardo, few pass more than one night within its walls. It is now seventeen years since a wretched chance first introduced me to my companions.

In that period the number of victims whom the banditti have secreted in this place, have far exceeded the number of months which I have passed in it."

Angela shuddered—Margaretta continued.

"The whole band have been for some time under an alarm lest Pietro should betray them, but his re-appearance has banished all apprehension; but why he assumed the character of a monk, is yet incomprehensible."

"Incomprehensible," repeated Angela, "was he not then a monk of the brotherhood of St. Marco."

"A monk of the brotherhood of St. Marco," repeated Margaretta, "did

you really believe him to have been a monk."

"Most certainly," repeated Angela.

She then detailed the circumstances of his succeeding father Anselmo in the office of father confessor at the Chateau di Montgalfi, without, however, mentioning her affinity to the deceased Morgini.

"De Montgalfi," repeated Margaretta, "are you known at the chateau; has the Marquis survived the crown of years which have elapsed since I saw him."

"Alas!" replied Angela, hiding her face in her hands, "the moment which claimed the debt which my unfortunate

father had to pay, gave birth to the misery which fate has destined to follow the steps of his offspring."

"Your father," re-echoed Margaretta; "are you then that Angela whom I, in moments happy but transient, nursed at the Chateau di Valmont. The young Valerio too?"

"Alas!" repeated Angela, "you have recalled to my recollection the name of the only being in the world, whose bosom glows with a sentiment of affection towards me, but with his fate I am unacquainted."

"The knowledge which I possess of his family," repeated Margaretta, "is so closely interwoven with the detail of

the circumstances which I have to relate to you, that I cannot recount the one, without touching on the other. I must, however, be cautious; if Bernardo knew I remained above five minutes in the chamber of any of those unfortunates, whose unpropitious stars have thrown them in his way; your confinement, too, would be the more severe, and the rigorous manner in which I am always treated if possible increased. He has often threatened me with the dungeon, which a large stone, at the bottom of the great staircase conceals. The miseries of a confinement within its narrow limits, I have oftened witnessed. Those wretch-

ed victims whom its miserable jaws receive, seldom quit its subterraneous boundaries; and till death releases them from their torments, they linger out an existence, embittered by the accumulating agonies, which the unpardonable crimes of their oppressors doom them to endure. That fate will not be thine; 'tis only those who have attempted to betray the secrets of their community; or whose knowledge of their haunts, has awakened their fears, that they condemn to the lingering misery of breathing out the remainder of their miserable days in the dark precincts of that infernal abode: but I must away, Signora," said she, rising

to depart; "in the evening we meet again."—Putting her finger on her lips, she retired, leaving Angela in a state of mind bordering on distraction.

In an agony of despair she threw herself on her bed; but the heart-appalling ideas, which floated on her mind, and which her utmost efforts could not dispel, kept her from repose, and she arose. Going to a small casement, which till now she had not perceived, and opening it, cast her eyes around, in hopes external objects would, in some measure, contribute towards restoring tranquillity to her agonised bosom. The window

commanded a view of the scenery which surrounded the ruined walls of the abbey; for such its ancient appearance and decayed arches bespoke it to have formerly been. A continued range of lofty mountains, whose tops were covered with snow, which a meridian sun in vain endeavoured to dissolve, bounded on one side the wild scene. Their bases stretching into the plain, were covered with pine and cypress, whose nodding heads were bent by the whistling winds. On the other, far across the barren heath, appeared a vast sheet of water, which bounded the whole prospect. On the tempestuous surface of the fluctuating ele-

ment, the swift-sailing vessel appeared now sinking beneath the level of the barren heath; now exalted again above the high beach, which abruptly terminated it.

Angela continued at the window, till the grey twilight cast her shadowy veil over the face of Nature; and not till the rising of the morn, whose silver beams disclosing passing objects to her view, pointed out Bernardo and Pietro returning across the heath, did she quit it. She soon heard the signal of their arrival; and Margaretta, hastening across the stone-pavement to admit them. But a short time elapsed, ere she distinguished a heavy

step in the gallery; when resuming her chair, she rested her head on her hand, and anxiously awaited the approach of the intruder.

At length the door opened, and Bernardo entered, bearing a dark lanthorn. "Signora," said he in a voice, which too plainly indicated he had been sacrificing to the rosy god, "the manners of the inhabitants of this edifice, differ widely from the ceremonies observed by those who inhabit that you have just quitted."

Angela was silent.

"I say," continued he, lighting the lamp as he spoke, "that the attendance which you will receive here,

will not be such as you have been accustomed to exact at the Chateau di Montgolfi."

Angela sighed at the unfeeling remark; and, though fearful of offending him, still remained silent.

"We shall find some method of restoring you to the use of your tongue," continued he, "ere you quit this habitation for a more secure one; and however short that time may be, your indifference will but increase the difficulties of your situation while here. You are in the power of those, whose interest it is to secure you beyond the prying eye of curiosity; or," conti-

nued he with a sneer, "the impotent researches of offended justice."

"That justice," said Angela, "which you so seemingly deride, will, ere the hour of repentance comes, overtake you; and the frantic terror which will rend your bosom, on the discovery of iniquities such as your's, must warn the guilty soul to shun thy wretched fate."

"Your reproaches are severe," replied Bernardo with a grin, that would have scared a dæmon; "but the fiats of offended power will go forth in vain, if directed against Bernardo. Secure from the approach of its mirmydons, I am seated like a lion on a rock, and

see their angry arrows wing their flight in vain. This dagger has secured the silence of many," continued he, drawing one from his girdle as he spoke, "and till this fails its duty, Bernardo is safe."

He quitted the apartment, and locking the door upon his hapless prisoner, he retired to the hall.

The faint and yellow gleam of the lamp, had long ceased to cast its sombre shades around the apartment, ere Angela, wearied with the conflicting emotions which at once inflamed her bosom, sunk into unquiet slumbers.

It was late the following morning

ere she arose. The entrance of Margaretta, with her breakfast, awoke her. On her entrance she said, approaching the bed on which Angela was sleeping, "My dear child, arise;" but on drawing the curtain, she perceived that the object of her solicitude still slept. The beams of the rising sun, however, darting full in her face, awoke her; and rising from her couch, she took a chair at the table; her attendant at the same time doing so. The meal passed nearly in silence; till, on the conclusion of it, Angela begged Margaretta to relate the history, which she had promised her on the preceding evening.

"Signora," replied Margaretta, "the utter impossibility, which I was convinced would always exist at having a long interview with you, induced me to sketch, in paper, the incidents of my life. You will find pourtrayed in that packet, the circumstances which led to the firm friendship, which afterwards subsisted between the Count de Valmont and your father. The Count, perhaps, you know.

"I have a faint recollection of him," replied Angela; "but ere I attained the period, when knowledge first expands the infant mind, he was no more. He left his son to the sole guardianship of my father. But, alas! death has

deprived both Valerio and myself, of the supports which sustained our infant years. One by one they fall around us, like the dry and withered leaves of an aged oak, when its trunk is assailed by the hollow blasts of winter. Ah! Valerio," she continued, "perhaps ere this thou art no more. If thou, too, hast left me to wander alone on the surface of this miserable earth, then, indeed, is the sun of my happiness eternally set. The hand of fate levels her severest shaft at my defenceless head!"

"Hope, my dear Signora, for the best," said Margaretta; "fortune, who has hitherto, with unremitting

acrimony, persecuted me, as well as yourself, will relent, and throw open the doors of our prison to us. But I expect Bernardo and Pietro to breakfast; they left the abbey at midnight, with a detachment of the banditti, to scour the forest; and, ere this, many an unwary traveller has become their prey. Heaven shield us," she continued, hearing a violent knocking at the portal; and hastily rising, she hastened to admit the intruders.

Angela, in silent dread, awaited the appearance of her gaoler. The cold tremor of apprehension pervaded her trembling frame, as she heard a slow and hollow groan issue from the court

beneath. She hastened to her window, and looking through the casement which commanded a view of it, saw Bernardo carried across bleeding, and to all appearance lifeless. With horror she gazed on his mangled form, as she saw it carried into the chamber he used to occupy. He was followed into it by two men, whose ferocious visages bespoke them members of the same marauding herd, who now held Angela in their clutches. They seemed to lament the fall of their comrade, as the bier on which he was placed, preceded them into the room. Here, however, they for a moment left him to the care of Margaretta and Pietro;

while they, with anxious and trembling steps, paced the court immediately before the door. After a few turns they stopped beneath the window, through which the wretched Angela watched their movements; and taking their seats on a stone-bench affixed in the wall, entered into conversation, but in too low a voice for Angela to catch but a passing sentence.

"Michielo," said the one nearest Angela, and who appeared to be the youngest of the two, "the young bastard fought well, but we quickly dispatched him. And his headstrong companion too, ere he could again flourish his sword, wet with the blood

of our old friend Bernardo, I whipt mine through his body, and the yelping cur ceased to bark."

"'Twas well done," replied his companion, "but the dose you gave him, I am afraid, will have but a temporary effect; the thrust was not mortal."

"Aye, as mine arm, used to such jobs, could make it," replied the first, "I heard his last groan; his parting breath seemed to play round the sword, which bade his fleeting soul seek other regions to wander in."

"I only wish your ideas may be correct," returned Michielo; "we should not, methinks, have left his

body for the crows to peck at, but have deposited it among the myriads which have preceded it; there, dead or alive, he would have mouldered to eternity among its kindred fellows. Many a braver fellow has perished that way, good Paulo."

"And many more will yet," replied Paulo; "the obstinate fools, who refuse the aid we exact from them, must still share his fate; and the daggers in *our* hands shall claim a tribute at theirs."

"Well spoken," said Michielo; "but where can the young Signora be, for the confinement of whom such

positive directions have been received."

"I believe," returned Paulo, "this *enchanting* place contains her; if so, she is in the custody of Bernardo."

"Then she is safe enough," replied the other; "if any one were to escape his argus eye, they would deserve their liberty; and I, for one, would give them credit for their ingenuity."

"True," rejoined the first; "but I have an idea, that the business of this morning in the forest, is not entirely disconnected with the confinement of this young Signora."

"I entertain the same idea," re-

turned Michielo, "from some hints which I received from Bernardo, during our ride towards the road, on which we were to meet the travellers. He, likewise, told me her name was ———."

Angela was all attention; she had feared her own name would pass their lips; but as Michielo uttered the last words, they arose from the bench; and bending their steps towards the chamber of Bernardo, the name of the injured person was lost in air.

Angela now retired from the window; and taking the narrative of Margaretta from her pocket, began the perusal of it.

"At least," thought she, unfolding the manuscript, "this will, for a moment, beguile the tediousness of my seclusion."

CHAPTER IV.

THE NARRATIVE OF MARGARETTA.

I ENTERED into the family of the Count de Valmont at a time when the young Valerio was two years old. His mother had been dead some months, the grief of De Valmont, however, was unabated. He retired from the noise and bustle of courts, to the congenial retirements of his domestic shades;

'twas there he invoked the shade of his lost Vicitoria—'twas there he was wont to wander amid the labyrinth, which had been planted under her inspection —'twas there she had formerly delighted to pursue her evenings walk. The responsive breathing of the zephyrs, which gently undulated the leaves of the trees, seemed to re-echo the loved tones of her voice to his ear.

Time, however, at length, in some measure, abated his grief for the irreparable loss which he had sustained, and, as he gradually recovered his serenity, the first object of his care appeared to be the offspring of his departed wife. By this pledge of the

affection of his beloved, all his attention was engrossed, and the rearing of his infant mind, in the paths of virtue and benevolence, the only wish of his heart. Tranquilly we passed the hours till the young Count had entered his fourth year. The reserve of De Valmont had worn off, and a calm cheerfulness succeeded the gloom of despair, which though accompanied with resignation, had formerly marked his features. This son became his only care; to shew him the primrose path to goodness, was now the only pleasure his widowed heart experienced.

I had been in the family of the Count de Valmont three years, when

one evening, as I was was sitting in the hall of the Chateau, with the best of the servants, a loud and reiterated knock at the hall door, accompanied by the clashing of swords, was heard. My master, alarmed at the noise, rushed from his study, in which he was engaged with his son, and entered the hall.

"Fly," said he to the servants, who, appalled at the idea, stood immovable, "fly to the succour of the distressed. No doubt, attacked by banditti, some weary traveller claims your aid: follow me then," he continued, taking down a sword, which hung pending to the wall, and hastened to the door.

The men ashamed of the cowardice they had evinced, followed his example, and hurrying to the gate, saw a gentleman nearly exhausted, supported by his servant, who was defending his master against the swords of a party of men, apparently disputing who should first plunge their weapon in his bosom. The Count, followed by his party, immediately attacked the maurauders; who, dismayed at the number opposed to them, dispersed. The Count ordered a party of them to mount their fleetest coursers and pursue them; while the remainder, by his direction, assisted your father—for it was himself—into the house. His wounds were not dan-

gerous, a contusion on the head, and two superficial gashes in the side were the only injuries he had received, but faint from loss of blood, he had nearly become the victim of the assailants, when the timely assistance of De Valmont preserved his existence.

His wounds were dressed with the utmost care by our housekeeper, whose medical knowledge exceeded that of any practitioner within ten leagues of the Chateau, and was conveyed to the chamber which the Count had ordered to be prepared for his reception.

The servant was our next care. The vengeance of the maurauders appeared to have been principally directed

against his master, and to accomplish his death their only aim, as a slight scratch on the face was the only mark which the man had received. He was therefore requested to give some account as to the horrid deed, which the villainy of the banditti had nearly accomplished, and which the timely interposition of our master alone had prevented.

"Love, love," replied he, sarcastically, "we have crossed forests, and commons, and rivers in the middle of the night, when the thunder and lightning would have scared the inhabitants of the regions below. We have encountered all the fell genii which my

grandmother, thirty years ago, warned me against; and last, though not least, we have encountered the more substantial horrors of this night—all for love."

De Valmont smiled—the man continued.

"My master, the Marquis di Montgolfi, has been a fortnight persuing this tract, which the father of his intended has made her take before him; and but for this accident, we should ere this have overtaken them. The banditti, however, have effectually stopped our career; but," continued he, "I hope we shall not long be indebted to your hospitality;" bowing to De

Valmont as he concluded, who, desiring the steward to see him well treated, retired.

We once more resumed our seats round the fire, and requested him to relate the particulars of the attack.

"My master," said he, in reply to our enquiries, "who is a Venetian nobleman of the name of Montgolfi, is desperately in love. The Lady who has been so successful in winning his regards, is the daughter of a nobleman of the same city. The families have long been at enmity, and during the life of the young Marquis's father he had dropped all hopes of his suit being successful. About a year since the

old Marquis sent his son to Paris, and me with him, whither soon after followed the Count and his lovely daughter, the lady Angela. My master, as is usual in such cases, was in raptures; but his joys soon ceased. We had been but a short time in Paris, ere news arrived that the Marquis di Montgolfi had had a severe blow in a fall from his horse, and that in all probability he would never survive the bruise he had received. We immediately left Paris for Venice, and arrived the day that was fixed for consigning his last remains to the abode of his ancestors.

The duties which are exacted from

one in the situation in which my master was placed, were most religiously observed; and he, being the only one in succession, took possession of the title and estate, and as soon as decency permitted, returned on the wings of love and expectation to Paris. What was his surprise and chagrin, however, at finding that the day before, the old Count and his daughter had left that city on their return to Venice. He immediately proceeded to retrace his rout, and at the last inn at which we inquired, were informed that we were not above an hour behind them. Fired with the expectation of again being near her, of again breathing the same air,

though not admitted among the circle of the friends by whom his adored Angela was surrounded, love spurred him on, and we had nearly reached the centre of the forest, on the borders of which the Chateau stands, ere he reflected that guide or guard were necessary. Disdaining, however, to return for the purpose of procuring them, we pursued our route, till a most violent storm obliged us to seek shelter in a cavern beneath a mountain, which skirts the borders of the heath.

Here we had not remained long, however, ere the sound of approaching footsteps obliged us to retire farther into its recesses, and a flash of

lightning, at that moment, illumining the mouth of the cavern, discovered to us three or four men standing near the entrance, in deep conversation. The clattering of horses' hoofs immediately after, announced their departure; and the storm having, in some degree, abated, we crept from our hiding-place, and going to the tuft of trees, in which we had left our horses, mounted them, and pursued our journey with the utmost speed, in order, if possible, to elude the people who had left the cave before us, who, we rightly conjectured, were banditti. Our efforts, however, were unavailing. We had just left the borders of the trackless forest in our

rear, when we were commanded to stop; and immediately a troop of the most ferocious-looking fellows that can be imagined, surrounded us. Relying, however, on the speed of his horse, the strength of his arm, and the length of his sword, he struck the foremost to the ground, and rushing forward, with the utmost celerity, we left them for a moment behind us; our expedition, however, availed us nothing. They presently surrounded us again, and renewed the combat with redoubled fury. A blow, however, from the sword of the chief of the banditti, brought my master to the ground; in the scuffle, we entered the court-yard of this hos-

pitable mansion. The alarm which the clashing of our swords occasioned, brought the benevolent master of it to our assistance. To his timely interposition, we owe both our lives; and to his hospitality, I am afraid, my master, contrary to his inclination, must be some time indebted. The paroxysms which this same love occasions, are numerous, and their effects various. If all lovers were exposed to the same difficulties and dangers to which we have been, I imagine the disorder would not be so prevalent. "Do you think it would?" continued he, turning to me, and smiling.

"I am not aware of the extent of its

powers," I replied; at the same time rising and desiring one of the servants to conduct him to his chamber, and was now separated for the night.

The next morning, the Marquis, your father, was discovered to be in a high fever. His wounds, and the agitation of his mind, had wrought his ideas to such a pitch, that reason had lost her empire, and his frenzied eyes no longer recognized friends from enemies. Notwithstanding every exertion was made, that skill and attention could suggest, a month elapsed ere the invalid could be permitted to quit his apartment. His servant, with the most faithful attachment, watched by the side of

the Marquis's bed, during the height of his disorder, and it was not till he was pronounced out of danger, that Conrade could be prevailed on to leave his chamber.

All apprehensions were at length removed, and the Marquis, assisted by his servant, left his chamber for the saloon, in which the Count was seated, to receive him. After the most heartfelt congratulations on the astonishing improvement which the looks of his guest indicated, the Count invitingly offered him the use of his house, till his health should be completely re-established.

"Will you, my friend," said he, "avail yourself of an offer, which the

uncertainty of your situation almost compels you to accept."

The Marquis, raising his eyes towards those of my hospitable master, expressed his gratitude: "Your offer," said he, "though of the most benevolent kind, other feelings compel me to refuse. A short time, indeed, must elapse, ere I can quit your sheltering roof. But, as soon as I am sufficiently recovered to travel, I must away. I have other wounds than those which the swords of the banditti inflicted."

The Count sighed; a responsive one burst from the bosom of the Marquis. "If," continued the latter, "the assassin's knife had reached the heart

which this sad bosom contains, it had ended the woes which I am otherwise fated to endure. But I, perhaps," (judging from the varying emotions which marked the countenance of De Valmont), "touch upon a tender chord, has the stealing hand of fate deprived you of the idol of your soul?" A tear started to the eye of the Count. "I fear it has—then are our fates reciprocal. But retrospection brings objects to view, which recent circumstances but ill enable me to combat with; and my slowly returning strength is unable to contend with my feelings."

"Compose yourself," replied De Valmont; "Providence, who portions

our trials to the extent of our fortitude, wills, that the rod with which it scourges us, should remain in our hands, that the inexperienced may profit by the knowledge which the unthinking have gleaned. It was madness to rush on the destruction to which your present state would infallibly expose you, were you to leave the Chateau at this crisis."

Finding the agitating reflections which had assailed the Marquis, had considerably reduced his strength, the Count prevailed upon him to permit his servant to assist him to his apartment; and having obliged him to swallow an opiate, to compose his spirits, he left him to repose.

The tranquillity which the recent circumstances had interrupted, was again completely re-established, and the fast-healing wounds of the Marquis were so far closed, as to permit his sometimes walking in the gardens, which then surrounded the pile. The Count and he were inseparable companions. A similarity in their fates, appeared to have drawn closer the bonds which gratitude, on the one hand, and benevolence, on the other, had first created.

At the expiration of another month, however, the health of the Marquis was completely re-established, and he was preparing to leave the Chateau. He determined on proceeding directly

to Venice, whither he knew the Lady Angela, was on her way, when he met with his unexpected detention.

"But," said he to the Count, in a conversation which took place the morning of his departure, as they were together tracing the mazy windings of of the gardens, "her father—the father of my Angela would not permit the residence of his daughter, even in Venice an hour, did he know the wretched Montgolfi breathed the same air. So irrevocable is the doom he has passed upon us, that the hills would rather remove their earth-encircled bases, and permit the rushing torrents, which perpetually flow from their summits, to

pass unmolested, than he recal the declaration which for ever disunites from me my beloved. Almost ere I could lisp the name of father, I was taught to curse that of the enemy of our family—was taught to invoke the maledictions of Heaven on their heads. How perverse, however, are the actions of human nature. The very persons, whose names I was formerly schooled never to utter without an anathema, I have now learned to adore. Those, the very sight of whom I formerly fled, I now pursue. In the death of the old Count only can I hope to succeed in the possesion of my fondest hopes. The bare idea of possessing her only

through such a medium, is a bar on my happiness. In my visionary reveries, however, hope waves her flattering pinions before, and bids me expect the blessed reward of all my cares."

The Count smiled at the enthusiasm of his guest. Just so had his fond fancy pictured the happy hours he should pass with his Victoria. But death, alas! had blighted the early prospect; and ere the dreams which his fevered imagination had pictured could be realized, he was separated from the object by whom his fondest affections were engrossed, and his widowed heart felt a pang which would terminate only with the life, the enjoyment of which,

the only disappointment he had met with, had for ever precluded. His reflections were interrupted by the Marquis continuing his harangue.

"You, my friend," continued he, have felt the pangs which a separation from a beloved object ever inflicts on a heart susceptible of a genial impression. The stoic may preach in vain, and the philosophers in vain exert their futile arguments;—the pain is still the same, though a familiarity with scenes of misery may dull the acuteness of the pang." So saying, he turned into a path which led to a labyrinth, to conceal the emotions which retrospection had excited.

They did not again meet till dinner, which passed nearly in silence. The engaging manners of the Marquis almost insensibly gained him a very high place in the friendship of my master, and he sighed to think that one so young and amiable, should have been left so early, to the ravages of disappointment and regret.

"You will, my friend," said the Count to his guest, "should unforseen circumstances render you the being, which your fond imagination pictures as the most enviable, visit me in my retirement. Your lovely Angela will here find relief from the noise and confusion of courts, and the unmean-

ing parade which ever prevail among the gay and the thoughtless. In the calm enjoyment of your domestic circle, your happiest hours will doubtless be spent. Will you then bestow a thought on the lone inhabitants of this sequestered mansion, and share your happiness with us."

The Marquis sighed: his thoughts had already sketched a scene of happiness, with the value of which the Count appeared to be so well acquainted.

"Gratitude," said the former, "would impel me to obey the dictates of a heart, which owes a continuation of its existence to your courage and humanity." A reverie succeeded; which,

however, was broken in upon by the entrance of Conrade for orders, respecting his master's intended route.

"I hope, Sir," said he, "you do not intend crossing that cursed forest again. The impression which the horrors of that evening made upon my mind, are scarcely effaced. In my dreams, I often imagine myself scouring, along with twenty robbers at my heels."

"We are not," said the Marquis, smiling, "we shall continue our route to Venice, so be prepared by sun-rise." The man bowed, and retired; and immediately after joined us in the hall.

"We are," said he, "about to leave you; I should be happy," turning to me as he spoke, "to make you the companion of my route."

I laughed; he appeared disconcerted.

"Serious subjects, require serious deliberation," he continued, "and though necessity obliges me to leave you here at present, a stronger inducement will prompt my return. I will claim you, if willing, the moment my master, who has been eighteen months travelling in search of happiness, reaches the goal of his wishes."

I smiled, really delighted at this half-declared proposal. His continual good humour, made him an agreeable

companion: and for his other good qualities, I judged, and I believe in general justly, content could not dwell in a bosom, which the pangs of vice or remorse had visited. I was therefore as pleased with the proposal, as he was with my acceptance of it, and ere we separated for the night, it was agreed, that he should return to the Chateau, the moment the Marquis, his master, should have concluded his peregrinations, and claim the fulfilment of the promise which I gave him.

Ere the penetrating beams of the rising sun had reached the depths of the valley, we saw them depart. Conrade and myself regretted that the period of

our separation appeared so uncertain. The Marquis, however, promised the Count to return within six months, and with this assurance we separated; not, however, I must acknowledge, without a pang.

Six months passed in the new, to me, dull monotomy of retirement; I longed to visit, with Conrade, the fairy scenes, with which he described the capital as abounding. I endeavoured, however, by the reflection that my visions would soon be realized, to console myself for my present privations.

One evening, however, as the Count and the young Valerio were engaged

in a pavillion, which the former had ordered to be erected on a spot sacred to the memory of his departed wife, and which was now his favourite retreat: a superb equipage, preceded by a detachment of soldiers, stopped before the gate. I apprised the Count of the circumstance, who immediately hastened to receive his visitors. It was, as he expected, the Marquis di Montgolfi, to whom the cavalcade belonged.

"My friend," said the Marquis, "in seeing you again, my happiness is complete. I am accompanied, however," continued he, handing a lady from the carriage, "to whom you will be pleased to extend your hospitality."

They now entered the hall, and I was almost immediately joined by Conrade, who the moment he could alight hastened to me.

"Margaretta," said he, "the time of probation is expired. My master has obtained the object of his fondest wishes, and I am impatient to attain the same happiness."

"If," said I, "my consent will add to it, you have it."

He immediately took my arm in his, and hastened towards the saloon, where the Count and his guest were seated. He forcibly kept my arm in his; "If," said he to the Marquis, abruptly entering the apartment in which they were,

and bowing in a manner, which raised a smile on the face of all present, "all the escapes which we have had together, are not faded from your memory; now the object is attained," bowing to the lady, "permit me to make a request, which is the only one my heart has now to offer."

"Name it," said the Marquis, "and it shall not be refused, to the participator of all my dangers."

"It is this then," said Cornade, "that you will order some monk, some holy and reverential father, to crown our ardent loves." The last words were pronounced so lovely, that the smile, which had before marked the

features of the master, was now converted into a laughter, at the singularity of the servant.

"What," said the Count to me, "Margaretta, are you going to leave me?"

"Not to leave you, sir," said I, vainly endeavouring to disengage my arm, from that of my facetious companion.

"If," continued Conrade, in the same tone, "you laugh at my woes, I will bury myself in some cavern, and linger out the remainder of my life in the inmost recesses of that forest, from the inhabitants of which we had so much difficulty in escaping."

"That you shall not do," replied

the Marquis, laughing still louder, "for the holy father, whose aid you solicit, shall render those vows binding, which, in the effervescence of your affection, you have made to each other."

"Then shall the feathered choristers of the grove, and the unfeathered choristers of some monastery, celebrate our union," said Conrade, as we left the apartment, from which, with great alacrity, I followed him. "My master has been married four months, 'tis time his man should follow his example."

"The old Count," continued Conrade, "had just given up the ghost,

when my master and myself reached Venice. The Marquis seized the opportunity, and in two months after the old fellow was deposited in the mausoleum of his ancestors, they were united within the holy pale of matrimony. What the sensations of the master were on that occasion, he can best determine; those of the man were terror and consternation. I could scarcely restrain him from leaping precipices and fording lakes, deep enough to drown a regiment of the Emperor's best troops, mounted upon elephants. If he were inclined to do it now, I think I should follow his example. But he is grown monstrous tame of late,

methinks; but the effect is usual, I believe."

I laughed, and we separated.

That day three weeks, however, we were united in the chapel of the Chateau. The Count and his party witnessed the ceremony. It was agreed that I should continue at the Chateau, in the place of old Bianca, who now grew infirm; and Conrade as gentleman to the Count.

The Marquis parted from him with considerable regret. The dangers they had shared together, in spite of the difference of rank, had attached them to each other; and it was with considerable reluctance that the Marquis

agreed to dispense with his future services. On the day of our marriage, however, the Marquis presented him with a liberal gratuity; and the Count was not backward in following his example.

After a residence of six months at the Chateau, a new guest was added to our number: this was no other than yourself.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Angela, "was this good woman present at my birth—present when thou, my mother, gave the forlorn, the solitary, Angela being."

A knock on her chamber-door broke the train of agonising reflections, to

which the narrative of Margaretta had given rise; and she hastily infolded the manuscript, and deposited it in her bosom.

She had scarcely placed it in safety, ere Pietro entered. The sword, which was hung to his girdle, was half unsheathed; and the blood with which it was stained, appeared to have been recently shed. A long gash in his forehead, increased the ghastliness of his countenance. Angela was horror-struck. How different, she reflected, was his present appearance, from that in which she had first become acquainted with him. To the imposing exterior of a monk, he then added the imposing

look, and passion-subduing conversation, of an anchorite, whose only companion, for half a century, had been a crucifix. Now what a contrast appeared: the determined villain painted on his countenance. In one hand he held a dagger; in his features the demoniack passions of rage and revenge appeared pre-eminently conspicuous. In vain his unhappy victim endeavoured to trace in his countenance, a lineament that bespoke humanity; she discovered only the dark designs and murderous intentions of a veteran robber.

"Prepare," said he at length, in a voice of thunder, "to leave this abode,

for one less congenial to your feelings. Circumstances render your removal necessary; every moment that you remain here teems with dangers; ere midnight you depart."

Angela, unable to bear the horrid intelligence, fainted.

"I will send Margaretta to you," continued he, in no way affected at her situation; "she is your best attendant in these cases."

He left the room; and soon after Margaretta entered.

"My dear Signora," said she, "calm yourself."

Angela was so far recovered, as to be able to resume her chair.

"Would," continued Margaretta, "that I were about to leave it. I would gladly exchange it for a dungeon, so irksome has my continuance here grown to me."

Angela would have spoken, but the words died on her lips. A few moments, however, completely restored her, and she said, "tell me, oh! tell me, Margaretta, why am I not suffered to remain here—here, surely, I am sufficiently excluded from the world. They have taken me from my home, and now will they bear me from my country; but I will not go; rather will I die at the feet of my persecutors, than accompany them to their haunts."

"In vain," said Margaretta, "will you refuse. They seldom permit any of their prisoners to stay long here, lest any untoward accident should lead to a discovery of their hiding-places; but summon your fortitude; your fate, as far as the present moment relates to, is irrevocably fixed. Something occurred in the forest which has hastened this determination. Bernardo is nearly dead, and Pietro, as you must have seen, wounded. Michielo, Pietro, and Paulo, will accompany you to the place of your destination. I must leave you, however, or my gaolers will be jealous of my long stay; keep yourself in readiness for your departure, as they

leave at midnight. Margaretta left the apartment, and Angela collecting the scanty wardrobe which Pietro had selected from her portmanteau, and supplied her with on her first confinement, packed it together; and again seating herself, anxiously awaited the summons expected. The time, however, hung heavy, and she once more drew the story of Margaretta from her pocket, and re-commenced her perusal of it.

CHAPTER V.

CONTINUATION OF THE STORY OF MARGARETTA.

THE appearance of the young stranger converted the solitude of the Chateau into a scene of life and gaiety. It lasted, however, but for a short time. As soon as the Marchese was sufficiently recovered, preparations were made for their departure for the capital. The Count, averse to parting with his

guests, for he would, if possible, have retained them wholly at the Chatean, entreated them to renew their visit, as soon as they had passed the period in Venice, which they proposed for themselves: this the Marquis readily promised to do.

The day preceding the one which was fixed on for the departure, at length arrived. The sun, just rising with renovated lustre, invited the Count and his party to taste the pleasures of the field, in which, since the arrival of the Marquis, he had sometimes indulged. To this Montgolfi assented, and they departed for the chase.

The day passed in the most uninterrupted solitude, evening threw her grey mantle over the face of nature, and still they were absent. The Marchese, at length, alarmed at the strangeness of the circumstance, dispatched some servants in pursuit of them, fearing lest the collected force of the banditti might prevent the possibility of their return. Midnight, with its gloomy terrors, passed, and still they appeared not. The agony of the Marchese every moment increased.

The morning sun-beams, at length, began to play among the tall elms, which covered the tops of the adjacent hills, when a loud knock at the hall-

door drew every one to it. The Marchese rushed from her apartment, and reached the gate, just as its opening discovered to those within the mangled form of the Count stretched on a bier, composed of the boughs which grew in the forest. The Marchese, at the sight of this dreadful spectacle, would have fallen, but for the Marquis, who, rushing to her assistance, caught her in his arms. Conrade now appeared, followed by a physician.

"My good friend," said the Marquis to the latter, "restore to society a man, without whom the order of benevolence is not complete."

The physician shook his head. "I

can," said he, "but restore him to temporary life; the vital spark, is nearly extinct, and my exertions will only bring back a portion of life, sufficient to render him sensible of the poignancy of his sufferings."

He now bound up his wounds in the best manner, which the exhausted state of his patient permitted; and administering a draught, ordered every one out of the room for a short time, lest any sudden emotion should injure him.

An hour elapsed ere any signs of returning animation appeared. A slow convulsive motion in his bosom, was the only indication which he now perceived; and another considerable space

elapsed, ere a second struggle announced him as still possessing a spark of life. He at length, however, opened his eyes, and stretching his hand to the Marquis, who had a minute before re-entered the apartment, uttered a low groan. The physician again desired silence; and administering a composing draught to the dying man, left the room himself.

"He will not," said he, "be able to speak this day—if ever. I shall, however, be exact in my attendance on him; and if I perceive any symptom, strong enough to warrant my introducing you to him, I shall certainly acquaint you."

The good man again retired to the chamber of his patient, and the Marquis joined his wife in the saloon. The day passed in anxious melancholy expectation till towards evening, when the physician entered to inform him, that the Count wished the presence of himself and the Marchese in his chamber. Thither they immediately followed the messenger.

The dying man was supported in the bed by pillows; his features were scarcely recognisible. His son, the little Valerio, was in the couch by the side of his father, drowned in tears. The sight of him appeared to engross all the Count's attention.

"Who," said he in melancholy accents, embracing his infant son as he spoke, "will now be your protector; who will shield you from the persecutions of power, or the attacks of resistless violence? Who will train your infant mind to acts of virtue and benevolence? Who guide your steps in the path of rectitude and truth? Alas! my son," continued he, regardless of the entrance of the Marquis, "no one. Not one will now be found so generous or disinterested as to bear the affection sufficient to shield thy infant years, from error, or thy future life from penitence and remorse."

"Do not, my friend," said the Mar-

quis, at length interrupting him, "indulge such melancholy reflection; you will yet live to increase the happiness of us all."

"Alas! no," replied the Count, "I feel the cold chill hand of death lie heavy at my heart; and one short hour will close my worldly career for ever. But, ere I go, will you promise to fulfil my last request?"

"Name it," replied the Marquis, "and though it should cost me my life, I will die in the attaining it."

"I shall not put your friendship to such a test," replied the Count; "should you ever feel the pang a father endures, when he is about to be

separated from his only child, when he is about to abandon that child for ever, unprotected and unfriended, you then, and then only, can be enabled to conceive the agony which I now feel. My Valerio will, alas! too soon be an orphan; his infant years will soon be without a fostering hand to lead him forward, to guide his wandering feet."

"Not while I live," replied the Marquis, "shall the offspring of my dearest friend be without a second father, should the hand of fate deprive him of the first."

The features of the Count relaxed somewhat of their sombre shade at the conclusion of this speech. "Then,"

continued he, "to your care I resign the dearest bequest I have to make. May heaven guard the happiness of your offspring, as you fulfil your pledge to my infant. Go then, my child," continued the dying man, directing the attention of his son towards the Marquis, "go to your future protector; go to the guardian of your infancy, so untimely deserted."

The Marquis received the precious pledge from the arms of the anxious father, and really felt the affection for the little orphan, which he had vowed to preserve for it. The solemnity of the scene drew tears from the eyes of the Marquis. "If," said he, "I ever

desert this infant, may the revenging arm of heaven hurl its most dreadful punishments on the impious perjuror."

The Count appeared less anxious. The little Valerio was far from being so. He tore himself from the arms of the Marquis, and rushing to the side of the bed on which his father lay, bathed his hand with his tears. This renewed the grief of the Count; he pressed him to his bosom, and bedewed his infant face with the tears of parental tenderness: "My son," said he, "soon must I leave you for ever. To your future protector I resign you."

Grief choaked his farther utterance;

and ordering the pillows which supported him to be removed, he sunk exhausted on the bed. Two faint but vain efforts, to speak, were all the tokens of remaining existence which we perceived; and in five minutes he was no more. Still we lingered in the apartment; still the fond hope remained, that the vital spark was not completely extinct; but, alas! it was in vain; the pale corpse was all that remained of De Valmont.

The Marquis drew his wife from the apartment; she was nearly insensible. The passing scene had drawn forth all her fortitude; and when the physician announced that the Count's last breath

had left him, but for the interference of the Marquis would have fallen.

Di Montgolfi took upon himself the direction of the funeral. According to the last will of the Count, he was to be buried in the cemetry of a small monastery, which himself had caused to be erected, close beneath the excavation of a rock, which rose at some distance behind the Chateau.

From Conrade I learned the particulars of the accident. Whilst in close pursuit of an enormous boar, which they had nearly driven into the toils, the Count's horse, alarmed at a sudden turn which the animal gave, took fright, and ran in a contrary di-

rection to that which he had before taken. Conrade, who was the only person near enough to witness the accident, immediately pursued him. In vain, however, was the utmost speed of his horse. The Count's, ere he could overtake him, had precipitated himself and rider down a most tremendous precipice, at the top of which Conrade arrived only in time to see his beloved master mangled and lifeless at the bottom. Horror-struck, he alighted, and threw himself after him; and arriving safely at the bottom, took the pale-bleeding form of his respected friend in his arms, to all appearance lifeless. He blew his horn in the hope

of assembling the rest of the company. Immediately the Marquis and his party, they having succeeded in destroying the object of their pursuit, appeared at the top of the descent. What must have been their consternation at perceiving the situation of the Count. A litter was immediately constructed, and the inanimate form conveyed to the castle. The Marquis, however, dispatched Conrade from the forest for a physician. They arrived together at the Chateau.

The several succeeding days were passed nearly in silence. The real grief which marked the countenances of us all, was that which the virtues of

so excellent a man excited, and which appeared like a monument of gratitude raised to his memory.

The sad evening, at length, arrived. The monks from the monastery were to attend to join the procession of real mourners, which were to follow the remains of their patron. About midnight the holy men appeared; and in sad and solemn state we moved forward. The dull gleaming rays of the torches, which the holy fathers bore in their hands, served but to render the surrounding gloom the more appaling. The wolf, scared by the pale glimmering of the tapers, whose rays invaded his long-immolested seclusion, burst

from his retreat; muttering death as he fled in search of a spotless liable to interruption. The deep responses of the monks, who now, as we approached the monastery, sung the requiem for the dead, sounded through the arched pile of ruins which skirted the road. We reached, at length, the chapel, and the coffin was deposited near the altar. The holy abbot began the service for the dead. His aged figure and reverend aspect, would have awed the most indifferent; what then must our feelings have been, who might be said to feel the full weight of grief.

The service was at length concluded, and we returned with slow and solemn

steps to the Chateau. The Marquis, ere he left the hallowed spot, cast a farewell glance at the stone, which for ever enshrined the remains of his friend; and a low groan issued from his bosom. The Marchese, who was combating her own grief, could administer but little consolation to the sorrows of her husband; and they left the chapel nearly insensible to every thing around them. We arrived at length at the Chateau, and sad and silent separated for the night.

Now, alas! my misfortunes commenced. The tranquil peaceful life which I had hitherto led was about to be interrupted.

A few days after the interment of the Count, the Marquis left the Chateau, and insisted that Conrade should accompany him for a short time. All the domestics were of course discharged, except myself and a woman, who had been but a short time in the employ of our master. When Conrade departed, an inward monitor told me we should never meet again. Our adiens were the most affecting. A sad presentiment prayed on my spirits, which made him also melancholy: till tearing himself from me, alas! to meet no more. Still do I remember the happy hours which I passed at the Chateau with regret; and sigh when I

reflect that nothing less than a miracle can restore me to happiness. Confined in this abode of infamy and death. A retreat unknown to all the world, except those unfortunates who fall into the merciless fangs of the wretches, by whom I am surrounded. To continue, however; when I returned into the Chateau, I found Anna overwhelmed with fears as to our future destiny.

"To live here," said the girl, "is impossible. I can never survive a months confinement in this old place without any person to speak to, except yourself. The long winterly nights will kill us both, now Conrade and Gonsalvo are gone,"

I endeavoured to quiet her fears, and my raillery at length prevailed, though, notwithstanding all my sophistry, I could not dissipate my own. They were, alas! too well founded.

One night, the accumulated horrors of which I still with dread remember, we retired early to rest: the thunder loud and reiterated howled over our heads, and appeared to shake the building to its centre. A temporary cessation, however, succeeded, and I had for an instant forgotten every surrounding object, when a clap louder than any of the preceding ones, roused me from my lethargy. I started from my bed, and rushing to the window, a second

flash disclosed to my view, through the casement of the chamber, a party of armed men, mounted, and apparently reconnoitring the Chateau. I uttered a loud scream, and Anna, who slept in the adjoining room, awoke, and came to my assistance.

"In the name of Heaven," said she, "what can those men want, whom I see surrounding the Chateau. "Hark! did I not hear them forcing the hall door? They have entered; oh! protect us heaven!"

They had, indeed, entered the Chateau; a loud crash announced the opening of the gate, and presently a

confused murmur of voices on the stairs bespoke their nearer approach.

"The holy virgin watch over us!" exclaimed I, "then banditti will murder us both."

Anna uttered a cry of terror. The men, who had just reached the gallery in which our apartments were, hearing the scream, burst the door of my room.

"Wretches," said I, "retire."

"Calm yourself," said the one, who appeared to be the captain, tauntingly, and who I afterwards learned was Bernardo, "follow us."

"In vain I entreated them on my knees to leave us behind. Bernardo

ordered some of his men to seize us. Four wretches with the visages of the fallen would have executed his commands, had I not tottered after them, followed by the trembling Anna. We were led from the hall to a carriage concealed behind a clump of trees before the entrance to the Chateau; and having tied our arms, and blindfolded us, they ordered us, upon pain of instant death, to remain quiet, and returned themselves into the mansion.

"Alas!" said I, "what will be our fate; what motive can these wretches have who spurn all laws human and divine, and thus tear us from our home,

and all that can attach us to existence."

The storm had not yet ceased, and the loud wind blew the pouring rain into the carriage (which, from our situation, we were unable to prevent) in torrents. Our persecutors did not return till the appearance of the sunbeams over the tops of the adjacent hills, warned them to leave the scene of their night's lawless villany. Suddenly the postillion mounted the poor animal that was affixed to our vehicle, and the robbers mounting at the same instant, surrounded the machine, and ordered the man to drive on. This he did at a furious rate. Anna, nearly dead with

fatigue, fright, and terror, sat in one corner of the carriage, mute, and almost senseless. I was little less affected at our situation. Five hours, however, brought us from the farther extremity of the forest to this place. It was then a regular ruin, with only one wing standing. The outer walls have been built by the banditti, at different times, as the increase of the band rendered it more necessary to their safety and accommodation.

We were taken from the carriage and carried into a kind of court. Bernardo here took the bandages from our eyes, and untying our hands, bade us follow him. This we willingly did, glad

to be freed from the company of such miscreants, as those who accompanied him. Anna, trembling, seized my arm.

"Ah! Margaretta," said the poor girl, scarcely able to stand, "what will now be our fate—doomed to linger out the rest of our days in a confinement among beings scarcely human."

These words were uttered in so low a tone that they were to me almost unintelligible. Bernardo, however, caught their import.

"The gag and the bandage shall be yours again;" cried the wretch—"even a dungeon shall be your abode, in which the beams of the sun have ne-

ver yet penetrated, unless you observe silence."

"Do not utter another word for the life of you," whispered Anna.

"The injunction was useless, these words sunk deep in our hearts. Their import, however, conveyed a soothing satisfaction to my mind, I gathered from this speech that a dungeon would not, probably, be our abode at present. We were bade to ascend the stairs, the bottom of which we had by this time reached. On arriving at the entrance of this chamber, Bernardo stopped, and unlocking the door, bade us enter.

"This is the chamber," said he, "which is to be your abode, till the

order for your future disposal is known. Complaint is useless; the winds only will hear you."

"Wretch," said I, "how can you justify such outrages? How will you justify tearing us from our homes, our peaceful abodes, when you shall be brought before that tribunal, whose laws you have so repeatedly broken."

"Who can bring us before any tribunal?" replied he, sneeringly; "not while I have a sword, and an arm strong enough to bury it in the hearts of those sufficiently rash to suppose themselves capable of doing it; but learn, that you will never leave this place, till Pietro and two or three more as trusty,

bear you to that, where lie the remains of many of the moralizing fathers of this mouldering abbey—I mean the grave."

I was, alas! too well convinced of this power of doing so, to reply.

"You perhaps," continued he, to Anna, "will accompany some of us to the antiquated abode of the captain of our band, there you will have more companions. Sea breezes, if you are fond of them, will then be yours, as they have been before to many an obstinate inhabitant of the western tower who have been precipitated from its summit to bathe in the waves which lash its base."

Anna shuddered, I could scarcely withstand the shock which this intelligence gave me.

"Murderer! assassin!" exclaimed I, frantically, "free me, or for ever dread the retribution which crimes like yours inevitably draw on the heads of those unhappy wretches, whom the dictates of humanity and justice cannot awe."

"It will come too late for you, I am afraid," said he sarcastically, as he left the room.

His retreating footsteps were no longer heard ere either of us ventured to speak. "Alas!" said I at length, breaking the silence which reigned,

"What will Conrade think when he returns to the Chateau, and finds it so mysteriously deserted."

"And what will Gonsalvo think when he returns and finds me absent?" said Anna, and a tear stood in her eye, "Alas! in all probability we shall neither of us see them any more. Confined in the place to which they threaten to convey me, my destiny, wretched as it is, is fixed for ever."

"Chance," said I, "may effect what the united efforts of feeble mortality could not accomplish."

"That chance will never be mine, I fear," sobbed Anna, nothing less than a miracle can release either of us. I

urged the probability that what has befallen us might have done so to Gonsalvo and yourself, but you laughed at the idea. Now, alas! a dreadful certainty proves that my fears were not groundless as you once attempted to persuade me they were."

"Your fears," replied I, "originated in nothing real, but while I spoke, my heart told me I was myself deficient in courage."

Steps were again heard on the gallery, a key turned in the rusty lock of our door, and Bernardo entered.

"Follow me," said he.

We gladly obeyed, an absence even of a minute from our prison was a re-

lief. He preceded us into a room in the hall.

"Here Pietro," said he, "are our prisoners. What time will Michielo and Paulo return?"

"In less than an hour I expect them here," replied Pietro, "they are I understand to escort this lady to the castle."

Anna shuddered, "Will you," said she, "part us wretches?"

She could not say any more, but clinging to me fainted, I drew my volatile from my pocket, and applying it she soon gave signs of returning animation.

"My dear girl," said I, "compose yourself, our fate is inevitable."

"Inevitable indeed," replied Bernardo, sneeringly, "not a regiment of the duke's best troops, with the vengeance of whom we have often been threatened, could alter it."

A signal at the portal of the building announced the return of some of the horde.

"Go to the door, Pietro," said Bernardo, "Michielo and Paulo, are doubtless returned to complete their share of the business. Prepare yourself, Madam," continued he, turning to Anna, "for a short ride. A few hours will forever immure you in our

castle. There you will be surrounded by those who would die rather than part with you."

He pronounced these last words in such a mock heroic manner, that notwithstanding our situation, I could scarcely forbear smiling; I however, though with difficulty, kept my risible sensations suspended. The entrance of Michielo and Paulo ended our suspense.

"I have," said the former, "the captain's order for conveying the younger of our two prisoners to the castle. You are to detain the other with you."

"The procession of monks, whom we attacked as they were returning

from a funeral, and which was the best job I ever was in, I had not had a meal for two days," said Paulo, " I hope we shall now be better supplied."

" How many days did you go without a meal before you came amongst us?" retorted Bernardo, " I'll warrant me many a one, when you was muleholder to the man who used to shew people the best road across the Alps. Though I must confess 'tis hard to fight when one's bravery will not purchase a bellyful. Come, an end to this," seizing Anna by the arm as he spoke, " you must accompany me."

" Whither?" said the poor girl, frantically.

"That you will too soon discover," added the wretch, drawing her arm through his, and leading or rather dragging her from the room across the court to a carriage which was waiting.

"Adieu," said I, mournfully.

She fell on my bosom and wept.

"Adieu," repeated I, still more affected, "if ever we meet again, how———."

"Come," said Michielo, forcing her into the carriage, "do not make any arrangements for that day, because it will never arrive."

He entered himself after her, and Paulo following his example, the postillion drove off, and from that moment

I have never beheld a female face except indeed I have caught a momentary glance at the victims whom the rapacity and cruelty which exists in the world have forced hither. When I reflect on the surprise of the Count and the affliction of Conrade, on their return to the Chateau, at finding it completely deserted, my head becomes giddy. "'Tis now eighteen years since I was brought, in all probability, to end my days surrounded by wolves capable of reflection. During this period there have been numberless victims brought hither, all of whom have been as successively carried off to what they call the Castle, except indeed,

two or three who have, like the erring vestals of old, been immured beneath an enormous stone, which covers the entrance to a vault at the foot of the stairs, with only a small portion of bread and water, which tend only to prolong the miseries of its miserable inhabitants. When once the stone which covers the entrance of it is placed in the aperture it is utterly impossible for any two persons to move it, and when the unfortunate victim whom its marble jaws have left to its fate, the destiny is irretrievably fixed. I have not known a single instance in which this sentence has been revoked. With this punishment I have often been threatened by the

cruel and vindictive Bernardo. He is one of the oldest members of the mauranding troop, and his savage disposition well fits him for the post he holds among them. Next to the captain, whom, by the bye, I have never yet seen, but of whom I have heard great mention, he is the commander and the confidence of the corps. The remainder of the troop were then young in the service.

I soon found myself by habit somewhat reconciled to my situation, for, except confinement, which has always been the most strict, I have experienced no material inconvenience, and, I even now, rest in hope that some for-

tunate chance may bring about a meeting between my goalers and the officers of justice, for to such a circumstance alone shall I ever be indebted for my liberty. Escape is impossible. Their fears are alive to every stratagem that ingenuity could invent, or courage execute. I shall steal to your chamber, if possible, before you leave this place, as I feel anxious to know of incidents which my flight, involuntary as it was from the Chateau, prevented my knowing. * * * *

* * * * *

Angela, pale, melancholy, and trembling, deposited the story of her humble friend in her bosom. With the

major part of the incidents which it contained she was already, from report, acquainted; but still the narrative was welcome to her; every moment which she spent apart from herself was a welcome one, and she considered them as so many added to her existence. Margaretta now appeared.

"You find," said the good woman, as she entered, "that our fates are alike unfortunate. A reciprocity in affliction draws a tie between the victims of misfortune, which nothing can sever; and the bond, though a melancholy one, strengthens as the cause of it increases."

"True," replied Angela, convinced

of the truth of the remark, "I am sorry that it is from experience you judge so correctly."

"I beg your pardon, Signora," replied Margaretta, "I had not presumption sufficient to intend that the words should apply in this instance. The infinite difference between us——."

"Say no more, I pray you," said Angela, resting her wearied frame on the shoulder of her attendant, "a difference which never existed but in the imagination of the overbearing and proud, now ceases to be even in idea, and I can but call you friend."

Margaretta led Angela to a chair. "Pray tell me," continued she, "do

the families of Montgolfi and de Valmont yet exist, farther than yourself."

"Scarcely," replied Angela, "two years since my mother died, my father scarcely survived the shock which her death gave him, and he followed her to the grave, and then was followed thither himself. Oh, Heavens, that so short a time should have taught me the bitter lesson which I had to learn; bid me put the cup of happiness to my lip, and turn the enchanting draught to poison as we take it."

Margaretta wept, Angela could not weep, but placing herself in her chair, with stoical indifference reviewed the past scenes of her life, and as memory

sketched the chequered picture, a convulsed laugh or broken sigh were all the indication which she gave of existence.

CHAPTER VI.

VALERIO de Valmont was just stepping into his chariot to visit the Duke de V———, when a messenger, nearly sinking with fatigue, and covered with dust, delivered a letter into his hand. In the Messenger he recognized a servant of the Montgolfi Family; he immediately returned into the house, and opening the letter, began a perusal of its contents.

"Ill, dangerously ill, and I not near him," continued he, reading; "order Conrade immediately to prepare for our departure."

Valerio, after sending his excuses to the Duke de V———, retired to his library to arrange his most pressing affairs.

The earliest appearance of the rays of the sun in the East, saw Valerio and Conrade leave Paris. They soon left that fascinating capital far in their rear.

"We must use our utmost speed," said Valerio, "the situation of the Marquis demands it."

"We shall find the delectable studs

which we shall meet with on the road, second our intention," replied Conrade; "but we will not pass that cursed forest alone; the bare idea makes me tremble. It was those robbers, doubtless, that ransacked your Chateau, and carried away my Margaretta. If they should attempt the same game with us, some of them shall feel the weight of our swords. I will revenge her, while I can find a man of them on the field."

"Console yourself with the idea that we will not attempt it without attendance."

"Yes, such attendance as we shall get on the borders," replied Conrade; "a set of cowardly miscreants, who

would rather scamper twenty miles another way, than lift a sword against a robber, at any time."

Valerio, whose reflections were not of the most consolatary description, could not support a conversation, and fell into a reverie, from which he was only roused by Conrade's hint, that he should change his horse at the next inn.

"Right," said the Count, "I forgot that the horse has not the same motives for perseverance which I have."

"True," said Conrade, "like my old master, your guardian; he was surprised when the horse dropped under

him, forgetting that the animal was not in love as well as himself."

The Count, notwithstanding the melancholy ideas which preyed upon his mind, could not forbear a smile at this ludicrous remark of his servant.

They had by this time reached the inn, and Conrade, dismounting to inquire if the landlord could accommodate them with complete steeds, on which they might pursue their journey; the landlord, who was, as he asserted, the only man who could do it within thirty miles, instantly complied with their request, and led from his stable a pair of animals, the very appearance

of which deterred Valerio and Conrad from trusting them.

"Can you," said the former, "accommodate us with a post chariot, and four of those delectable creatures?"

"Delectable creatures," repeated the landlord, I'll venture a leap from the summit of one of the Appennines with you, that there is not such another pair between this and the Alps."

"I hope not," said Conrade, "but will you bring out two more, or I am afraid we will never reach the Alps."

"Why, I'll try; but the numerous equipage which have passed, and which invariably stop at my door; they know, by the bye, they cannot procure such

any where else, have nearly drained me of my stock of horses; but I'll try to accommodate you."

"Then have the goodness to do it immediately," said Conrade, impatient at the delay which the host's impertinent nonsense occasioned.

The latter did as he was desired, and harnessing them all to the chaise, ordered the postilion to convince the gentleman, that they had not their equal.

Valerio took his seat in the vehicle, desiring Conrade to do the same, and having fastened the door, they drove off at what the landlord called a furious rate.

They continued their route, fre-

quently changing horses, as the badness of the roads rendered it impossible for the poor animals to go long stages, till they arrived at the last inn, which was on the borders of the forest. On the arrival of the carriage, the host, as usual, ran to receive the travellers.

"Can we procure any people who will accompany us through the forest?" said Valerio to the man as he alighted.

"Yes, Seignor," replied he; that cottage which is built on the side of the hill, is the residence of an old man and his two sons, they frequently accompany travellers across the heath."

"Will you shew me the best way to their abode?" said Valerio.

The landlord replied in the affirmative, and they left the inn to discover the residence of old Nicolus. Having taken the proposed track, they soon arrived at the small wicket which defended the approach to the cottage, they announced themselves, and the salutation was returned by a young peasant, whom Valerio discovered was the young son of Nicolus.

"Is your father at home, Joanno?" said the landlord to the young man.

"No," returned the other, "he and my brothers are at present away from home; but I expect them by twelve to-night."

"This Signor wants you all for guides across the forest."

"Across the forest!" repeated he "he surely does not intend crossing the forest to-night! I would not accompany him for the whole wealth which the banditti, who have haunted the forest, as my father tells me, these five-and-forty years, have collected."

Valerio smiled at his vehemence; but, though cowardice rather than real danger dictated his words.

"If," continued the young peasant, "surmise will do, we are all at your service. But my father is as frighted as any of us at the idea of crossing it by night."

"Signor," said the landlord to Valerio, "will sun-rise answer your purpose. I will engage to provide you the best bed round the country."

Valerio at length, though very reluctantly, consented to continue the night at the Inn, and having engaged the young peasant, together with his father and brother, to accompany them by sun-rise, they returned hither. On their arrival Valerio immediately retired to the apartment allotted him, desiring Conrade to follow his example, that they might profit as much as possible by the delay which necessity occasioned.

Wearied with the fatigues to which

he had been exposed during the last few days, he had scarcely rested his head on his pillow ere slumber, soft and refreshing, visited his eyelids, and his anxious hopes and fears were at once lost in the lithean balm of forgetfulness.

The first ruddy tints of the morning, however, beheld the aged Nicolus and his two sons at the gate of the Inn. As soon as Valerio was informed of their attendance, he hastened to prepare for his departure, ordering Conrade, at the same time, to lead the horses from the stable; they took leave of their hospitable host, and entered on their trackless route across the dreary

forest: "some twenty years ago," said Conrade, breaking, at length, the silence which had hitherto prevailed, "I remember crossing this heath, during my servitude with your guardian. It was to that journey, and to the robbers who infest these caverns, my master was indebted for the friendship of your father."

"Yes," said Valerio, "an unfortunate chance was productive of the most beneficial effects, but for that, the moment which rendered me fatherless, would likewise have made me friendless."

"Signor," said Nicolus, "did you

ever feel the weight of the sword of one of these robbers?"

"Not of one of them," returned Conrade; "for I believe there were, at least, twenty in the first attack, and but for assistance, I had long been deposited in the tomb of my forefathers. Valerio smiled.

"If," said Nicolus, "we should meet the robbers, we may conclude ourselves lost for ever, for they seldom suffer those to escape who are once within their reach, and that you should be now in existence, after an encounter with them, is almost miraculous: I would not meet them for all the wealth which they have accumulated. It is

not, however, probable we shall see them on this side the forest, as they have retired to their holes for the day. By the time we reach the farthest extremity of it, the sun will be on its descent, and then they sally forth

"The executive must be badly conducted," returned Conrade, "that they have not purged the earth of these miscreants."

"Truly so," returned Nicolus, "but various detachments of the Emperor's troops have in vain attempted to discover their retreat: their researches have always proved fruitless."

"Then I think either conduct or

courage must be wanting," returned Valerio.

"Their retirement, wherever it may be, is inaccessible," returned Nicolus, "they have robbed and murdered people even on the very heels of a retreating soldiery. But they have the means of rendering a pursuit of them impractible. When they sound a retreat, which is but seldom, one might as well attempt to remove the snow which covers the Alps, with boiling water, as uprsue them.

"Then they must both be very impractible," returned Conrade.

"I should not like to be engaged in either," replied Joanno, "the snow

would freeze me in the one, and the sight of the robbers in the other."

Conrade laughed. Valerio, however, took no interest in the passing scene; soon involved himself in the silent reflections of his own bosom. The alarming intimation which he had received respecting the state of his friends health, filled his mind with disagreeable ideas. If the hand of death should claim his last breath, he exclaimed mentally, before I reach the ruins of my early years, to what perils may not my beloved Angela be exposed; the tender tear, perhaps, may not be able to move the obdurate heart of some inflexible guardian, whom the Mar-

quis may appoint. If it should be his brother, I tremble at the idea, Angela in the power of Manfredino; oh, heavens! well fitted for his occupation, the tears of the widow and the orphan would in vain plead the cause of a fallen enemy, whom his sword had levelled with the earth. What will be the path of my beloved in the protection of such a man. As soon would the bleating of the lamb move the insatiate jaws of a wolfe, to pity and compassion. Alike, unheard and unseen, would be the heart-moving complaints, and the starting tear of a child whom a thirst for war and bloodshed had licenced to render fatherless. It must not be, oh! hea-

vens! it must not be. Would I were now beside the couch of my revered protector. Oh! heaven, spare him.

Urged by the agony of reflection, in which he was involved, he unmercifully applied his spurs to the sides of his courser, who, quickening his pace, would soon have left the remainder of the party far behind, had not Conrade immediately followed him, and by an exertion of his lungs, recalled him to a sense of his situation.

Valerio, still in his waking dream of misery, stopped mechanically.

"My dear Master," said Conrade, as he reached the spot where the Count had stayed his horse, "it is utterly

impossible for our guides at least to keep up with you. Their horses are nearly done up already, and we shall be scarcely able to reach the end of our journey on our own, if you continue at this rate."

Valerio was perfectly convinced of this, and striving to recall his scattered senses, he made a feint effort to speak.

Old Nicolus and his two sons had by this time reached the spot.

"We had better," said the old man, "be in company, as we have nearly reached that part of the forest most infested with the banditti.

Joanno and his brother grew pale at he mention of these words.

"On our return," continued the old man, "we shall have nothing to fear, they seldom attack people of our description: but you are not safe even after you have passed the forest; I have seen them attack buildings without the precincts of the forest. Do you not recollect Colvo,"—continued he turning to his eldest son, "some sixteen or seventeen years ago, when we witnessed them surrounding the Chateau di Valmont?"

Valerio started, Courade turned pale.

"Yes, I do," replied the one whom the old man addressed, "I was then scarcely twelve years of age. I recollect crawling under the chaise, in

which two ladies were confined, for shelter against the storm which then raged with such fury."

Conrade regarded the old man with a scrutinizing gaze: "can you give us any particulars," said he, "of the incidents of that night."

"Very few," replied the old man, "but those few are for ever imprinted on my recollection."

"Relate them," replied Conrade, scarcely able to conceal his internal agitation.

"In the first place, Signor," said the old man, "it will be necessary to inform you, that I had been occupied the whole day in conducting three

gentlemen across the forest to the village which skirts it on the other side. And having more courage than prudence, I ventured on my return the same night. I had, however, scarcely got two miles ere, by the noise of their horses' feet, I heard a troop of what I immediately concluded then to be brigands. I seized my son's arm, and dragging him, rather then leading him, along, we concealed ourselves in the court-yard of the Count de Valmont's house. Our choice of a hiding place, however, was unfortunate, we had scarcely taken our stations, ere the whole troop, together with a chaise, entered the court; they all immediately

allighted, and surrounding the house, swore with bitter oaths imprecating that they would level it with the earth, they soon forced the gate of the hospitable mansion, and for a while all was hushed; the thunder howled most bodingly over our heads, and the rain rushed in torrents from the over-charged clouds, now and then a gleam of forked fire illumined the exterior of the mansion; a part again appeared at the gate, with torches, bearing two screaming females in their arms, and going to the chaise put them in, and again returned to the house. I now desired Colvo to follow me, and softly stealing from behind the pillars, we crawled under the chaise.

An alarm within the building again compelled us to rest still, which subsiding, we once more stole from our concealment. The violence of the storm, however, had not in the least abated, but congratulating ourselves on our fortunate escape, we were imperious to its peltings."

What must have been the sensations of Valerio and Conrade at this recital. "Alas!" said the latter to his master, "we were too fatally correct when we imagined Margaretta and Anna in the hands of the banditti. These wretches, regardless of the dictates of humanity, have doubtless immured them both in the infernal caverns, whither I care

not if I follow them: but this sword shall find a passage through their obdurate hearts, ere I tamely yield to their chains," drawing his sword as he spoke.

Valerio, though scarcely less affected, smiled at his enthusiasm, and calmly desired him to sheath it again, till a fit object for his heroism presented itself. He did as he was desired, debarring vengeance against the base villains who had robbed him of a wife and of happiness, for keen recollection brought to his remembrance the tranquil hours he had spent at the Chateau de Valmont.

Nicolus and his two sons were surprised and alarmed at the extravagance

of Conrade. "Signor," said the old man to him, "does my short story revive disagreeable recollections—were you in any way connected with those resident at the Chateau?"

"Yes—No!" hesitatingly replied Conrade. "I had a slight connexion with—with—but no matter; I'll bury my sword deeper in their bosoms for every pang they have made me feel."

"And they are not few, good Conrade," said Valerio.

"Not a few, indeed," replied Conrade; "they have been the authors of all our misery from the time I first crossed this heath in the service of the

then young Marquis di Montgolfi, now your guardian to this moment."

They had now reached the last winding of the road when their attention was arrested by a loud and repeated whistle.

"We are all lost," said the aged Nicolus, "the banditti are in our rear."

"I hope they will continue so," replied Conrade, setting spurs to the sides, of his horse; the whole party did the same, and reached the top of the hill in full speed. Valerio turned, if possible, to see their numbers. He, however, could discover no one.

"Our fears overcome our judgment, I believe," said he as he joined them;

"I cannot discern any one in pursuit of us."

"Probably not," replied Nicolus; "nor shall we see them until they are within sword's length; they are so well acquainted with the intricacies of the forest, that they never shew themselves till they are up with their victims, and the unfortunate traveller finds himself surrounded ere he has imagined his danger."

A few minutes verified the old man's prognostics. Loud whistles on all sides struck dismay into the hearts and countenances of the party, and ere they had recovered sufficient presence of mind to run or draw, they were sur-

rounded by a troop of banditti, who suffered the peasants to escape.

Valerio and Conrade, however, attempted to stem the torrent, but in vain; a thrust from one of the troop brought the latter to the earth; not, however, till he had buried his sword in the bosom of their leader. Valerio, at length, faint from loss of blood, and the numerous wounds he had received, fell from his horse; and the whole troop, conceiving their business complete, left the spot.

The sun, at length, descending behind the distant hill, ceased to illumine our hemisphere, and night's shadowy and dusky veil spread its sombre shade

over the whole spot, when a peasant, returning from a small village which skirted the forest, saw two men pale, bleeding, and senseless, lying beneath the shade of an enormous ash, which bordered the road. He immediately alighted from his vehicle, and going to the spot, discovered that they still breathed.

Compassion had never been a stranger to his bosom; he therefore lifted them into his machine, as tenderly as possible, lest he should open afresh their half-closed wounds, and conveyed them to his cottage, tying their horses, which he found grazing near them, to the tail of his cart. On arriving at the

portal of his lonely mansion, he gently tapped, and a young woman came to the gate.

"Geraldine," said the good peasant, "go, prepare your mother for the reception of two victims to the swords of our neighbours."

Geraldine screamed. The old man having alighted, entered the hut, and ordering his wife and daughter to follow him, they returned to the cart which contained the unfortunate objects of their benevolence, bearing a lamp. They together carried Valerio into their abode, and placed him on a bed, and returning for Conrade, he was soon placed by the side of his master.

A tedious interval elapsed ere the utmost exertions of the hospitable cottagers for the recovery of their wounded guests were crowned even with a token of success; and after some time spent in fruitless expectation, the good peasant desired his wife and daughter to retire, determining to pass the night by the side of the couch on which lay his unfortunate patient.

Morning dawned ere the wishes of the benevolent man were crowned with a prospect of success. 'Twas then, however, the pulse of Valerio gradually increased in quickness. A convulsive movement of the lips caused the pea-

sant to start from his seat, and he left the room to call his daughter.

Geraldine hastily arose, and entered the apartment of the invalid. Our hero had by this time opened his eyes, and casting them on his preserver, began to comprehend the scene, and made a feeble attempt to utter an expression of gratitude; his strength, however, was unequal to the effort, and he sunk back on his pillow. A successful application, however, again restored him to his senses.

"By what fatal chance am I here?" he articulated in a feeble tone, turning his vacant and sunken eyes towards his friendly host; when, catching a glimpse

of Conrade, who lay still senseless beside him, he continued—"Oh! Heavens, can it be possible! could not their thirsty swords spare thee, my more than friend. He franticly took his faithful servant's hand. Can such injustice as this be permitted by Heaven?" he continued, "and———"

He could not articulate more, tho' his lips still moved. A deep gash which he had received in his breast, opened afresh, and recollection, revenge, all were lost with the blood that flowed from the wound. On applying another bandage, however, the effusion was stopped, and a gentle sleep which succededed, seemed to have absorbed

for a time, the recollection of his misfortunes.

Conrade now claimed the undivided care of his preserver. A convulsive noise in his throat, gave a token which they heard with joy, and he shortly after opened his eyes. The sight of his master completely recalled his scattered ideas.

"Compose yourself," said the old man, seeing Conrade about to speak, "Your master, for such suppose him to be, is out of danger."

"Heaven be praised," replied Conrade, "the fell purpose of these wretches is defeated."

"If possible," replied the peasant,

"follow the example of your master;" and, anxious that his advice should be taken, he administered a composing draught, which he, with difficulty, prevailed on Conrade to swallow, and desiring his daughter to follow him, he left the room; and Conrade, whose ideas were too much deranged to admit of his reflecting on the situation in which he was placed, soon forgot every thing.

The sun of the succeeding morning had attained the summit of the highest hill, ere the lethargy in which they were involved, deserted them. The entrance of their host, at length aroused

them. They were both considerably recovered.

"'Tis well," said the old man, as he entered, "I find my pains have not been in vain."

Valerio motioned his gratitude, but was not able to speak.

"I will leave you again," continued the old man; "you cannot yet bear conversation."

The old man retired.

Three days elapsed ere they were, in the opinion of the old peasant, sufficiently restored to bear conversation. The first use they made of the permission which he at length gave them, was to request he would inform them of the

circumstances which occurred immediately after they became senseless.

"You, Signors," replied the old man, "are not the first whom the swords of these wretches have disabled. But you are more fortunate than many whom they leave in the situation, in which we discovered you. They frequently leave their victims for wolves to gnaw, as their intentions towards you were doubtless as benevolent; though, thank Heaven, they have not succeeded. They have now become so formidable," continued the old man, "that few people attempt passing without guards. They do not, however, confine their depredations to the forest,

many of them are in the pay of the great."

An idea crossed his mind at this information, but it quickly subsided. "Who," exclaimed he, mentally, "could have an interest in my death, but 'tis accident, they are no banditti of the common herd, and the money which I still possess was not their object. My death then could be their only stimulus, in that they have not succeeded."

The old Peasant continued, "They are convenient appendages to the retinue of some of our nobles. An object of envy, or hatred is by their means quickly removed, and the disappear-

ance of a rival in the favour either of a mistress or a prince is no uncommon thing in the well-regulated police of Venice."

Valerio shuddered at the horrid truth. His informer continued:

The instances of this kind which have occurred since I have been an inhabitant of this forest are numerous. But few escape the vital thrusts which the banditti are in the habit of bestowing on those unfortunates, whom the finger of persecution or revenge points out to them as objects for their accursed stiletto. You have had the good fortune to be amongst those few, and a few months, I trust, will enable you to

continue your journey. Your horses which I found near the spot, are safe in my stable.

Valerio felt gratified at this piece of information, and his gratitude towards his benevolent preserver was unbounded. Two weeks passed, and the rapid recovery of their strength promised a speedy termination to their confinement; when, one evening, as Valerio and Conrade were sitting together at the window of their chamber, recapitulating the occurrences of the last month, the vanity of a young man, who took his station beneath the window of the apartment devoted to the use of Gualdino, diverted their attention. He

sung the following lines to his mistress :—

For thee I've brav'd the Alpine snows,
Have climb'd the mountain's tufted height,
Have forced the eagle to his flight,
And left the prowling wolf to ravenous crows.
Then say, oh! say, will thou be mine;
Like the lone dove,
That set above,
Whose gentle mate,
Has met its fate,
And now its tender pains it tells,
To the tall trees and silent dells,
And prints its sorrows on the birch's rhine.

To thee and peace I bade adieu,
When from my native fields I stray'd,
I changed the city for the shade,
And roam'd from happiness and you.

Thy form my wandering steps pursued—
And hill and dale,
My mournful tale
Responsive sigh'd;
While I, to hide
My trackless steps, in caverns deep,
Would seek the forest, wood, and steep;
And wander on by wretchedness subdued.

Valerio smiled at the mournful enthusiasm with which the young man repeated his lines, but this sensation was followed by one more inclining to pity, when he saw Gualdino come from the back of the house, as though by stealth, and lead him into the wood which fronted the cottage.

"The sighs of the lover are not attended to by the inexorable father of the nymph, I suppose," said Conrade laughing.

"Then be it ours to reconcile him to them," returned Valerio; "to this family we owe a debt of gratitude, to repay which our efforts must be exerted, and which cannot be more effectually done, than by securing the happiness of his daughter."

They now left the apartment, and entering that in which the old man, together with his wife, were sitting, found him exclaiming violently against the partiality of his daughter for Cosmo, for that was the name of her young lover.

"Be pacified, my good Sir," said Valerio, "and state the objections which you have to this Cosmo for your son-in-law."

"Objections," replied the old man; "have I not good reason to object to one who has neither money to support, or a house to take her to."

"Well," replied Valerio, "and is it not possible to supply the want of either."

"Possible it is, Signor, but not probable, money is required to get money, and he has not a ducat to begin with; and must I confide my daughter to the care of such a one?"

"When she returns," replied Vale-

rio, "let her be introduced to me, and if Cosmo accompanies her, let me see him likewise."

The old man promised to do as desired, and an hour had scarcely elapsed ere they all joined the invalids in their apartment, to which they had previously retired. The young man appeared to be nearly of the age of Geraldine, with a prepossessing and genteel air, unusual to people of his description. "He had recently," he said, in explanation, "left a situation in the city for the purpose of soliciting the hand of his Geraldine, and taking up his abode with his intended father-in-law. His suit, however, had been re-

jected, and in the height of his despair, he had resolved, in an interview with Geraldine, to persuade her if possible to elope with him. To this proposition Geraldine had refused her consent, and they had returned to the house in order, if possible, to move the heart of her father.

"Well," said Valerio, after a pause of some time, "cannot this affair be arranged previous to my departure. Would you both like to visit the capital?"

The old man shook his head, "I would wish," said he, "to retain my children round me, and when age marks the termination of my career with help-

lessness and infirmity, I may be surrounded by those to whom I am attached by the indissoluble ties of nature and affection."

"It would be ill repaying the gratitude which I owe you, my generous preserver, were I to tear the prop from your declining years, and leave you solitary and abandoned, I will myself establish Cosmo in any way you may choose."

The gratitude of the young people at the words of Valerio were unbounded. They fell on their knees before him, and with tears of joy thanked him for the interest he had taken in their happiness. Conrade was affected at the

enthusiasm of joy which the benevolence of his master seemed to have diffused. Valerio was not less happy. The emotions, which the reflection of having trebly repaid an obligation, excite, are the most grateful inmates of the human mind. But the reflection was not unmixed with pain. "Would," he continued, mentally, "I were as near the possession of my Angela as this young cottager is that of his beloved Geraldine, then indeed I should be happy. But I must not reflect; retrospection too painfully pictures days of childhood, when Angela, hanging on my arm, would rival the softest note of the rising lark, as we were together

seated in a spot; sacred to the memory of departed virtue. Oh! happy shades! shall I ever revisit thy bowers? shall I ever again wander amid thy winding labyrinths." He was aroused, at length, by the voice of Conrade, the words which the faithful fellow was uttering sunk deep in his bosom, there was an analogy between them, and the subject of his meditation.

"If," said Conrade, "we should ever return——."

"Return from whence," interrupted the old man, as though inadvertently.

"From the scenes which the delightful neighbourhood of Venice affords,"

returned Conrade, "we shall I hope find you still here."

"Most probably you will," replied the old man, "this cottage has been the abode of my family this century, and I still inhabit it from a motive of respect to the memory of those departed. In turn it came to me, and I shall bequeath it to my son, with the hope that his descendants will inhabit it after him."

His auditors smiled at the enthusiasm with which the old man appeared to regard the cottage which had been the abode of his sires.

"But the clemency of the banditti," returned Valerio, "astonishes me."

"They," replied the old man, "have never molested us, and we consider them rather as friends than determined enemies. Their object is not the paltry plunder which my cottage would afford. They find their purpose answered better in the hearts of those unfortunates whom malice and revenge induce them to sacrifice."

Valerio was aware of this, and the motive of their forbearance was fully explained. He, however, in his present weak state, felt weary at the farther continuation of the conversation, and having expressed his wish to be alone, his importunate friends left the room immediately. Fatigued with the

exertions of the day, himself and Conrade soon fell into a profound slumber.

Another fortnight saw the completion of their views with respect to Cosmo, and a few days more their own perfect cure evinced the skill and benevolence of their preservers, and Valerio, anxious to continue his rout, took leave of his kind host with the most heartfelt expressions of gratitude.

END OF VOL. I.

London: Printed by J. Dean, 57, Wardour-street, Soho.